THE PARTISAN REVIEW AWARD

The editors and the advisory board of Partisan Rewiew are pleased to announce their decision on the first annual Partisan Review Award of one thousand dollars for a significant contribution to literature. The recipient of this year's award will be George Orwell, the well-known English writer.

At the moment Mr. Orwell is so much in the public eye for the success of his last novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* that it may be well to repeat that, under its original terms, our Award was to be given, not for a single book, but for a distinguished body of work. The present acclaim of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* ought not to be allowed to fade before bringing to general attention Mr. Orwell's whole career as a writer, which has shown a steadiness of purpose uncommon in our time, and it is our hope that the present Award may assist this process of making known the work of an important writer.

This career coincides with the turbulent and confused years of the 'thirties, and it has only been fairly recently that Mr. Orwell has emerged as one of the best and most interesting writers that the English have produced in this period. Only in 1946 did he reach a wide public in this country with *Animal Farm,* a fiction in the form of a fable, and a volume of critical essays, *Dickens, Dali and Others;* and yet by that time he had already produced half a dozen books, all of which bear re-reading and some of which deserve reprinting. His first work, *Down and Out in Paris and London,* did not attract wide attention when it appeared in 1933, but its quality of permanence is attested by a reprint of 1940. From this first book Mr. Orwell's writing has been marked by a singular directness and honesty, a scrupulous fidelity to his experience that has placed him in that very valuable class of the writer who is a witness to his time. An important novel, *Burmese Days,* perhaps Mr. Orwell's best as a "straight" novel, and a work that can stand comparison with such first-rate studies of India as Kipling's and E. M. Forster's, appeared in 1934; in 1936 came a second novel, *A Clergyman's Daughter.* Thereafter Mr. Orwell became engaged in the Spanish Civil War on the Loyalist side, and two books, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), and *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), date from this period.

The participation in the Spanish Civil War was an experience

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more profound and fruitful for Mr. Orwell than it was for some other writers because his qualities of political intelligence and sensitivity were never lost or compromised in the confused issues of that struggle. Participation in politics is not, as may have been sometimes thought, sufficient to make a writer; but Mr. Orwell would be much less the writer he is if he had not participated fully and actively in the international socialist movement of his period, if he had not confronted resolutely all sides of that historical fact, and, more important still, had not come through the ordeal intellectually and morally intact. Some of the fruits of his experience of politics and Spain were gathered in two books, *Coming up for Air* (1939), and a study of British socialism, *The Lion and the Unicorn* (1941).

If we add to the above list a great body of first-rate literary journalism—reviews, polemic, reportage—we get the picture of a thoroughly three-dimensional literary career, busy without being preoccupied with the trivial, exhibiting a persistent thread of unity without being rigid or doctrinaire. His subjects have always been major parts of modern experience. But Mr. Orwell has succeeded not merely in virtue of his matter: precisely the point about his integrity is that it is as much an aesthetic as a moral quality, that it involves and is in a way identical with the excellence of his writing. Thus Edmund Wilson compared the language of *Animal Farm* to Swift and the comparison seems to us just, for Mr. Orwell's writing lives in the great English tradition of direct, spare, economical and forceful prose. Right now when the word "tradition" seems to have become associated in some American literary circles almost exclusively with seventeenth-century baroque poetry, it seems worthwhile to point to this other English tradition, to recall that writers once practised their discipline in relation to public affairs, and that—to choose only one example—Swift's political pamphlets are still a living part of English literature. The remarkable thing about even the most topical of Mr. Orwell's writings (we recall, for example, his reports from England during the first years of the War that appeared in the pages of this magazine) is that they can still be re-read with interest and enlightenment. It is a sign of real vitality in a writer that, dealing so often with topical, historical, or occasional themes, he has nevertheless managed almost always to be close to the heart of his matter.

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Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

THE CAUSES OF THE CIVIL WAR: A NOTE ON HISTORICAL SENTIMENTALISM

The Civil War was our great national trauma. A savage fraternal conflict, it released deep sentiments of guilt and remorse—sentiments which have reverberated through our history and our literature ever since. Literature in the end came to terms with these sentiments by yielding to the South in fantasy the victory it had been denied in fact; this tendency culminated on the popular level in *Gone with the Wind* and on the highbrow level in the Nashville cult of agrarianism. But history, a less malleable medium, was constricted by the intractable fact that the war had taken place, and by the related assumption that it was, in William H. Seward's phrase, an "irrepressible conflict," and hence a justified one.

As short a time ago as 1937, for example, even Professor James G. Randall could describe himself as "unprepared to go to the point of denying that the great American tragedy could have been avoided." Yet in a few years the writing of history would succumb to the psychological imperatives which had produced *I'll Take my Stand* and *Gone with the Wind*; and Professor Randall would emerge as the leader of a triumphant new school of self-styled "revisionists." The publication of two vigorous books by Professor Avery Craven—*The Repressible Conflict* (1939) and *The Coming of the Civil War* (1942)—and the appearance of Professor Randall's own notable volumes on Lincoln—*Lincoln the President: Springfield to Gettysburg* (1945), *Lincoln and the South* (1946), and *Lincoln the Liberal Statesman* (1947—brought about a profound reversal of the professional historian's attitude toward the Civil War. Scholars now denied the traditional assumption of the inevitability of the war and boldly advanced the thesis that a "blundering generation" had transformed a "repressible conflict" into a "needless war."

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The swift triumph of revisionism came about with very little resistance or even expressed reservations on the part of the profession. Indeed, the only adequate evaluation of the revisionist thesis that I know was made, not by an academic historian at all, but by that illustrious semi-pro, Mr. Bernard De Voto; and Mr. De Voto's two brilliant articles in *Harper's* in 1945 unfortunately had little influence within the guild. By 1947 Professor Allan Nevins, summing up the most recent scholarship in *Ordeal of the Union,* his able general history of the eighteen-fifties, could define the basic problem of the period in terms which indicated a measured but entire acceptance of revisionism. "The primary task of statesmanship in this era," Nevins wrote, "was to furnish a workable adjustment between the two sections, while offering strong inducements to the southern people to regard their labor system not as static but evolutionary, and equal persuasions to the northern people to assume a helpful rather than scolding attitude."

This new interpretation surely deserves at least as meticulous an examination as Professor Randall is prepared to give, for example, to such a question as whether or not Lincoln was playing fives when he received the news of his nomination in 1860. The following notes are presented in the interests of stimulating such an examination.

The revisionist case, as expounded by Professors Randall and Craven, has three main premises. First:

1) that the Civil War was caused by the irresponsible emotionalization of politics far out of proportion to the real problems involved. The war, as Randall put it, was certainly not caused by cultural variations nor by economic rivalries nor by sectional differences; these all existed, but it was "stupid," as he declared, to think that they required war as a solution. "One of the most colossal of misconceptions" was the "theory" that "fundamental motives produce war. The glaring and obvious fact is the artificiality of war-marking agitation." After all, Randall pointed out, agrarian and industrial interests had been in conflict under Coolidge and Hoover; yet no war resulted. "In Illinois," he added, "major controversies (not mere transient differences) between downstate and metropolis have stopped short of war."

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Nor was the slavery the cause. The issues arising over slavery were in Randall's judgment "highly artificial, almost fabricated. . . . They produced quarrels out of things that would have settled themselves were it not for political agitation." Slavery, Craven observed, was in any case a much overrated problem. It is "perfectly clear," he wrote, "that slavery played a rather minor part in the life of the South and of the Negro."

What then was the cause of war? "If one word or phrase were selected to account for the war," wrote Randall, " . . . it would have to be such a word as fanaticism (on both sides), misunderstanding, misrepresentation, or perhaps politics." Phrases like "whipped-up crisis" and "psychopathic case" adorned Randall's explanation. Craven similarly described the growing sense of sectional differences as "an artificial creation of inflamed minds." The "molders of public opinion steadily created the fiction of two distinct peoples." As a result, "distortion led a people into bloody war."

If uncontrolled emotionalism and fanaticism caused the war, how did they get out of hand? Who whipped up the "whipped-up crisis"? Thus the second revisionist thesis:

2) that sectional friction was permitted to develop into needless war by the inexcusable failure of political leadership in the fifties. "It is difficult to achieve a full realization of how Lincoln's generation stumbled into a ghastly war," wrote Randall. " . . . If one questions the term 'blundering generation,' let him inquire how many measures of the time he would wish copied or repeated if the period were to be approached with a clean slate and to be lived again."

It was the politicians, charged Craven, who systematically sacrificed peace to their pursuit of power. Calhoun and Adams, "seeking political advantage," mixed up slavery and expansion; Wilmot introduced his "trouble-making Proviso as part of the political game;" the repeal clause in the Kansas-Nebraska Act was "the afterthought of a mere handful of politicians;" Chase's Appeal to the Independent Democrats was "false in its assertions and unfair in its purposes, but it was politically effective"; the "damaging" section in the Dred Scott decision was forced " by the political ambitions of dissenting judges." "These uncalled-for moves and this irresponsible leadership," concluded Craven, blew up a "crack-pot" crusade into a national conflict.

It is hard to tell which was under attack here—the performance

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of a particular generation or democratic politics in general. But, if the indictment "blundering generation" meant no more than a general complaint that democratic politics placed a premium on emotionalism, then the Civil War would have been no more nor less "needless' than any event in our blundering history. The phrase "blundering generation" must consequently imply that the generation in power in the fifties was *below* the human or historical or democratic average in its blundering. Hence the third revisionist thesis:

3) that the slavery problem could have been solved without war. For, even if slavery were as unimportant as the revisionists have insisted, they would presumably admit that it constituted the real sticking-point in the relations between the sections. They must show therefore that there were policies with which a non-blundering generation could have resolved the slavery crisis and averted war; and that these policies were so obvious that the failure to adopt them indicated blundering and stupidity of a peculiarly irresponsible nature. If no such policies could be produced even by hindsight, then it would seem excessive to condemn the politicians of the fifties for failing to discover them at the time.

The revisionists have shown only a most vague and sporadic awareness of this problem. "Any kind of sane policy in Washington in 1860 might have saved the day for nationalism," remarked Craven; but he did not vouchsafe the details of these sane policies; we would be satisfied to know about one.* Similarly Randall declared that there were few policies of the fifties he would wish repeated if the period were to be lived over again; but he was not communicative about the policies he would wish pursued. Nevins likewise blamed the war on the "collapse of American statesmanship," but restrained himself from suggesting how a non-collapsible statesmanship would have solved the hard problems of the fifties.

In view of this reticence on a point so crucial to the revisionist argument, it is necessary to reconstruct the possibilities that might lie in the back of revisionism. Clearly there could be only two "solutions" to the slavery problem: the preservation of slavery, or its abolition.

Presumably the revisionists would not regard the preservation

* It is fair to say that Professor Craven seems in recent years to have modified his earlier extreme position; see his article "The Civil War and the Democratic Process," *Abraham Lincoln Quarterly,* June 1947.

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of slavery as a possible solution. Craven, it is true, has argued that "most of the incentives to honest and sustained effort, to a contented, well-rounded life, might be found under slavery. . . . What owning and being owned added to the normal relationship of employer and employee is very hard to say." In describing incidents in which slaves beat up masters, he has even noted that "happenings and reactions like these were the rule [sic], not the exception." But Craven would doubtless admit that, however jolly this system might have been, its perpetuation would have been, to say the least, impracticable.

If, then, revisionism has rested on the assumption that the nonviolent abolition of slavery was possible, such abolition could conceivably have come about through internal reform in the South; through economic exhaustion of the slavery system in the South; or through some government project for gradual and compensated emancipation. Let us examine these possibilities.

1) *The internal reform argument.* The South, the revisionists have suggested, might have ended the slavery system if left to its own devices; only the abolitionists spoiled everything by letting loose a hysteria which caused the southern ranks to close in self-defense.

This revisionist argument would have been more convincing if the decades of alleged anti-slavery feeling in the South had produced any concrete results. As one judicious southern historian, Professor Charles S. Sydnor, recently put it, "Although the abolition movement was followed by a decline of antislavery sentiment in the South, it must be remembered that in all the long years before that movement began no part of the South had made substantial progress toward ending slavery. . . . Southern liberalism had not ended slavery in any state."

In any case, it is difficult for historians seriously to suppose that northerners could have denied themselves feelings of disapproval over slavery. To say that there "should" have been no abolitionists in America before the Civil War is about as sensible as to say that there "should" have been no anti-Nazis in the nineteen-thirties or that there "should" be no anti-Communists today. People who indulge in criticism of remote evils may not be so pure of heart as they imagine; but that fact does not affect their inevitability as part of the historic situation.

Any theory, in short, which expects people to repress such spon-

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taneous aversions is profoundly unhistorical. If revisionism has based itself on the conviction that things would have been different if only there had been no abolitionists, it has forgotten that abolitionism was as definite and irrevocable a factor in the historic situation as was slavery itself. And, just as abolitionism was inevitable, so too was the southern reaction against it—a reaction which, as Professor Clement Eaton has ably shown, steadily drove the free discussion of slavery out of the South. The extinction of free discussion meant, of course, the absolute extinction of any hope of abolition through internal reform.

2) *The economic exhaustion argument.* Slavery, it has been pointed out, was on the skids economically. It was overcapitalized and inefficient; it immobilized both capital and labor; its one-crop system was draining the soil of fertility; it stood in the way of industrialization. As the South came to realize these facts, a revisionist might argue, it would have moved to abolish slavery for its own economic good. As Craven put it, slavery "may have been almost ready to break down of its own weight."

This argument assumed, of course, that southerners would have recognized the causes of their economic predicament and taken the appropriate measures. Yet such an assumption would be plainly contrary to history and to experience. From the beginning the South has always blamed its economic shortcomings, not on its own economic ruling class and its own inefficient use of resources, but on northern exploitation. Hard times in the eighteen-fifties produced in the South, not a reconsideration of the slavery system, but blasts against the North for the high prices of manufactured goods. The overcapitalization of slavery led, not to criticisms of the system, but to increasingly insistent demands for the reopening of the slave trade. Advanced southern writers like George Fitzhugh and James D. B. DeBow were even arguing that slavery was adapted to industrialism. When Hinton R. Helper did advance before the Civil War an early version of Craven's argument, asserting that emancipation was necessary to save the southern economy, the South burned his book. Nothing in the historical record suggests that the southern ruling class was preparing to deviate from its traditional pattern of self-exculpation long enough to take such a drastic step as the abolition of slavery.

3) *Compensated emancipation.* Abraham Lincoln made repeated proposals of compensated emancipation. In his annual message to

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Congress of December 1, 1862, he set forth a detailed plan by which States, on an agreement to abolish slavery by 1900, would receive government bonds in proportion to the number of slaves emancipated. Yet, even though Lincoln's proposals represented a solution of the problem conceivably gratifying to the slaveholder's purse as well as to his pride, they got nowhere. Two-thirds of the border representatives rejected the scheme, even when personally presented to them by Lincoln himself. And, of course, only the pressure of war brought compensated emancipation its limited hearing of 1862.

Still, granted these difficulties, does it not remain true that other countries abolished slavery without internal convulsion? If emotionalism had not aggravated the situation beyond hope, Craven has written, then slavery "might have been faced as a national question and dealt with as successfully as the South American countries dealt with the same problem." If Brazil could free its slaves and Russia its serfs in the middle of the nineteenth century without civil war, why could not the United States have done as well?

The analogies are appealing but not, I think, really persuasive. There are essential differences between the slavery question in the United States and the problems in Brazil or in Russia. In the first place, Brazil and Russia were able to face servitude "as a national question" because it was, in fact, a national question. Neither country had the American problem of the identification of compact sectional interests with the survival of the slavery system. In the second place, there was no race problem at all in Russia; and, though there was a race problem in Brazil, the more civilized folkways of that country relieved racial differences of the extreme tension which they breed in the South of the United States. In the third place, neither in Russia nor in Brazil did the abolition of servitude involve constitutional issues; and the existence of these issues played a great part in determining the form of the American struggle.

It is hard to draw much comfort, therefore, from the fact that other nations abolished servitude peaceably. The problem in America was peculiarly recalcitrant. The schemes for gradual emancipation got nowhere. Neither internal reform nor economic exhaustion contained much promise for a peaceful solution. The hard fact, indeed, is that the revisionists have not tried seriously to describe the policies by which the slavery problem could have been peacefully resolved.

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They have resorted instead to broad affirmations of faith: if only the conflict could have been staved off long enough, then somehow, somewhere, we could have worked something out. It is legitimate, I think, to ask how? where? what?—at least, if these affirmations of faith are to be used as the premise for castigating the unhappy men who had the practical responsibility for finding solutions and failed.

Where have the revisionists gone astray? In part, the popularity of revisionism obviously parallels that of *Gone with the Wind*—the victors paying for victory by pretending literary defeat. But the essential problem is why history should be so vulnerable to this literary fashion; and this problem, I believe, raises basic questions about the whole modern view of history. It is perhaps stating the issue in too portentous terms. Yet I cannot escape the feeling that the vogue of revisionism is connected with the modern tendency to seek in optimistic sentimentalism an escape from the severe demands of moral decision; that it is the offspring of our modern sentimentality which at once evades the essential moral problems in the name of a superficial objectivity and asserts their unimportance in the name of an invincible progress.

The revisionists first glided over the implications of the fact that the slavery system was producing a closed society in the South. Yet that society increasingly had justified itself by a political and philosophical repudiation of free society; southern thinkers swiftly developed the anti-libertarian potentialities in a social system whose cornerstone, in Alexander H. Stephens's proud phrase, was human bondage. In theory and in practice, the South organized itself with mounting rigor against ideas of human dignity and freedom, because such ideas inevitably threatened the basis of their own system. Professor Frank L. Owsley, the southern agrarian, has described inadvertently but accurately the direction in which the slave South was moving. "The abolitionists and their political allies were threatening the existence of the South as seriously as the Nazis threaten the existence of England," wrote Owsley in 1940; " . . . Under such circumstances the surprising thing is that so little was done by the South to defend its existence."

There can be no question that many southerners in the fifties had similar sentiments; that they regarded their system of control as ridiculously inadequate; and that, with the book-burning, the cen-

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sorship of the mails, the gradual illegalization of dissent, the South was in process of creating a real machinery of repression in order more effectively "to defend its existence." No society, I suppose, encourages criticism of its basic institutions. Yet, when a democratic society acts in self-defense, it does so at least in the name of human dignity and freedom. When a society based on bond slavery acts to eliminate criticism of its peculiar institution, it outlaws what a believer in democracy can only regard as the abiding values of man. When the basic institutions are evil, in other words, the effect of attempts to defend their existence can only be the moral and intellectual stultification of the society.

A society closed in the defense of evil institutions thus creates moral differences far too profound to be solved by compromise. Such a society forces upon every one, both those living at the time and those writing about it later, the necessity for a moral judgment; and the moral judgment in such cases becomes an indispensable factor in the historical understanding.

The revisionists were commendably anxious to avoid the vulgar errors of the post-Civil War historians who pronounced smug individual judgments on the persons involuntarily involved in the tragedy of the slave system. Consequently they tried hard to pronounce no moral judgments at all on slavery. Slavery became important, in Craven's phrase, "only as a very ancient labor system, probably at this time rather near the end of its existence"; the attempt to charge this labor system with moral meanings was "a creation of inflamed imaginations." Randall, talking of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, could describe it as "a law intended to subordinate the slavery question and hold it in *proper* proportion" (my italics). I have quoted Randall's even more astonishing argument that, because major controversies between downstate and metropolis in Illinois stopped short of war, there was reason to believe that the Civil War could have been avoided. Are we to take it that the revisionists seriously believe that the downstate-metropolis fight in Illinois—or the agrarian-industrial fight in the Coolidge and Hoover administrations—were in any useful sense comparable to the difference between the North and South in 1861?

Because the revisionists felt no moral urgency themselves, they deplored as fanatics those who did feel it, or brushed aside their feel-

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ings as the artificial product of emotion and propaganda. The revisionist hero was Stephen A. Douglas, who always thought that the great moral problems could be solved by sleight-of-hand. The phrase "northern man of southern sentiments," Randall remarked, was "said opprobriously . . . as if it were a base thing for a northern man to work with his southern fellows."

By denying themselves insight into the moral dimension of the slavery crisis, in other words, the revisionists denied themselves a historical understanding of the intensities that caused the crisis. It was the moral issue of slavery, for example, that gave the struggles over slavery in the territories or over the enforcement of the fugitive slave laws their significance. These issues, as the revisionists have shown with cogency, were not in themselves basic. But they were the available issues; they were almost the only points within the existing constitutional framework where the moral conflict could be faced; as a consequence, they became charged with the moral and political dynamism of the central issue. To say that the Civil War was fought over the "unreal" issue of slavery in the territories is like saying that the Second World War was fought over the "unreal" issue of the invasion of Poland. The democracies could not challenge fascism inside Germany any more than opponents of slavery could challenge slavery inside the South; but the extension of slavery, like the extension of fascism, was an act of aggression which made a moral choice inescapable.

Let us be clear what the relationship of moral judgment to history is. Every historian, as we all know in an argument that surely does not have to be repeated in 1949, imports his own set of moral judgments into the writing of history by the very process of interpretation; and the phrase "every historian" includes the category "revisionist." Mr. De Voto in his paraphrases of the revisionist position has put admirably the contradictions on this point: as for "moral questions, God forbid. History will not put itself in the position of saying that any thesis may have been wrong, any cause evil. . . . History will not deal with moral values, though of course the Republican radicals were, well, culpable." The whole revisionist attitude toward abolitionists and radicals, repeatedly characterized by Randall as "unctuous" and "intolerant," overflows with the moral feeling which is so virtuously excluded from discussions of slavery.

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An acceptance of the fact of moral responsibility does not license the historian to roam through the past ladling out individual praise and blame: such an attitude would ignore the fact that all individuals, including historians, are trapped in a web of circumstance which curtails their moral possibilities. But it does mean that there are certain essential issues on which it is necessary for the historian to have a position if he is to understand the great conflicts of history. These great conflicts are relatively few because there are few enough historical phenomena which we can confidently identify as evil. The essential issues appear, moreover, not in pure and absolute form, but incomplete and imperfect, compromised by the deep complexity of history. Their proponents may often be neurotics and fanatics, like the abolitionists. They may attain a social importance only when a configuration of non-moral factors—economic, political, social, military—permit them to do so.

Yet neither the nature of the context nor the pretensions of the proponents alter the character of the issue. And human slavery is certainly one of the few issues of whose evil we can be sure. It is not just "a very ancient labor system"; it is also a betrayal of the basic values of our Christian and democratic tradition. No historian can understand the circumstances which led to its abolition until he writes about it in its fundamental moral context. "History is supposed to understand the difference between a decaying economy and an expanding one," as Mr. De Voto well said, "between solvency and bankruptcy, between a dying social idea and one coming to world acceptance. . . . It is even supposed to understand implications of the difference between a man who is legally a slave and one who is legally free."

"Revisionism in general has no position," De Voto continues, "but only a vague sentiment." Professor Randall well suggested the uncritical optimism of that sentiment when he remarked, "To suppose that the Union could not have been continued or slavery outmoded without the war and without the corrupt concomitants of war is hardly an enlightened assumption." We have here a touching afterglow of the admirable nineteenth-century faith in the full rationality and perfectibility of man; the faith that the errors of the world would all in time be "outmoded" (Professor Randall's use of this word is suggestive) by progress. Yet the experience of the twentieth

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century has made it clear that we gravely overrated man's capacity to solve the problems of existence within the terms of history.

This conclusion about man may disturb our complacencies about human nature. Yet it is certainly more in accord with history than Professor Randall's "enlightened" assumption that man can solve peaceably all the problems which overwhelm him. The unhappy fact is that man occasionally works himself into a log-jam; and that the log-jam must be burst by violence. We know that well enough from the experience of the last decade. Are we to suppose that some future historian will echo Professor Nevins' version of the "failure" of the eighteen-fifties and write: "The primary task of statesmanship in the nineteen-thirties was to furnish a workable adjustment between the United States and Germany, while offering strong inducements to the German people to abandon the police state and equal persuasions to the Americans to help the Nazis rather than scold them"? Will some future historian adapt Professor Randall's formula and write that the word "appeaser" was used "opprobriously" as if it were a "base" thing for an American to work with his Nazi fellow? Obviously this revisionism of the future (already foreshadowed in the work of Charles A. Beard) would represent, as we now see it, a fantastic evasion of the hard and unpleasant problems of the thirties. I doubt whether our present revisionism would make much more sense to the men of the eighteen-fifties.

The problem of the inevitability of the Civil War, of course, is in its essence a problem devoid of meaning. The revisionist attempt to argue that the war could have been avoided by "any kind of sane policy" is of interest less in its own right than as an expression of a characteristically sentimental conception of man and of history. And the great vogue of revisionism in the historical profession suggests, in my judgment, ominous weaknesses in the contemporary attitude toward history.

We delude ourselves when we think that history teaches us that evil will be "outmoded" by progress and that politics consequently does not impose on us the necessity for decision and for struggle. If historians are to understand the fullness of the social dilemma they seek to reconstruct, they must understand that sometimes there is no escape from the implacabilities of moral decision. When social conflicts embody great moral issues, these conflicts cannot be assigned

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for solution to the invincible march of progress; nor can they be bypassed with "objective" neutrality. Not many problems perhaps force this decision upon the historian. But, if any problem does in our history, it is the Civil War.

To reject the moral actuality of the Civil War is to foreclose the possibility of an adequate account of its causes. More than that, it is to misconceive and grotesquely to sentimentalize the nature of history. For history is not a redeemer, promising to solve all human problems in time; nor is man capable of transcending the limitations of his being. Man generally is entangled in insoluble problems; history is consequently a tragedy in which we are all involved, whose keynote is anxiety and frustration, not progress and fulfillment. Nothing exists in history to assure us that the great moral dilemmas can be resolved without pain; we cannot therefore be relieved from the duty of moral judgment on issues so appalling and inescapable as those involved in human slavery; nor can we be consoled by sentimental theories about the needlessness of the Civil War into regarding our own struggles against evil as equally needless.

One must emphasize, however, that this duty of judgment applies to issues. Because we are all implicated in the same tragedy, we must judge the men of the past with the same forbearance and charity which we hope the future will apply toward us.

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Angus Wilson

TWO STORIES:

LIFE AND LETTERS

It had rained heavily the night before and many of the flowers in the herbaceous border lay flattened and crushed upon the ground. The top-heavy oriental poppies had fared worst; their hairy stalks were broken and twisted, and their pink and scarlet petals were scattered around like discarded material in a dressmaker's shop. But they were poor blowsy creatures anyway, thought Mrs. Searle, the vulgar and the ostentatious survive few blows. Nevertheless she chose sticks and bast from the large trug which she trailed behind her, and carefully tied the bent heads, cutting off the broken ones with the secateurs. It was at once one of the shames and one of the privileges of gardening, she thought, that one was put in this godlike position of judgment, deciding upon what should live and what should be cast into outer darkness, delivering moral judgments and analogies. It was only by a careful compensation, an act of retribution, such as preserving the poppies she had condemned, that she could avoid too great an arrogance. She fingered the velvety leaves of the agrostemma sensuously, there were so few flowers of exactly that shade of rich crimson, and how gloriously they lay against their silver foliage. There should be more of them next year—but less, she decided, of the scarlet lychnis, there was nothing more disappointing than a flower spike on which too few blooms appeared. Ragged, meagre and dowdy for all their bright colours, like the wife of the Warden of St. Jude's. How depressing that one still remembered that dispiriting little woman sitting there talking in her slight North country accent, and dressed in that absurd scarlet suit.

"Your signature on this petition, Mrs. Searle, would be such a help. If we University women can give a lead. . . . I mean we've all

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too easily decided that war is inevitable, it's only by thinking so that we make it, you know." "Of course," she had found herself answering mockingly "who can understand that better than I? You don't remember the last war, but I do. Those hundreds of Belgians, each without a right arm. Oh! it was terrible." The ridiculous little woman had looked so puzzled that she had been unable to resist embroidering. "Don't you know Belgium then?" she had said. "Not a man there to-day with a right arm, and very few with right eyes. Those were all gouged out with hot irons before the Kaiser himself. To make a Roman holiday, of course." The woman had gone away offended. Silly little creature, with all her petitions she had been most anxious to prove her ardour in the war when it came, although of course like everyone in Oxford she had been perfectly safe. How they had all talked of the terrible raids, and how they had all kept out of them. At least she had preserved her integrity. "Thousands killed brutally in London last night" she had said to the Master "and everyone of us preserved intact. What a glorious mercy!" They thought she was mad, and so she was, of course, judged by their wretched middle-class norm. "I hereby faithfully swear once more" she said aloud "that I will make no compromise, and I utterly curse them from henceforth. May no wife of any fellow in either of the major Universities be fecund, nor may the illicit unions of research students be blessed," and she added maliciously "May the stream of sherry so foolishly imported by this present government be dried up, so that there may be no more 'little sherry parties'." It was monstrous when things of importance—spirits for example—were in short demand—though what such jargon really meant one was at a loss to understand—that such frivolities as sherry parties should be indulged.

Suddenly she could hear that other voice inside her speaking slowly and distinctly, counting in the old, familiar fashion—two bottles of gin in the trunk in the attic, two in the garden shed, one in the bureau, she had the key to that, and then one in the bottom of her wardrobe with the shell mending box. The bureau one was a bit risky, Henry occasionally used that, but with the key in her possession . . . six bottles in all. I'll send Henry down with that girl to the pub for a drink before lunch and they'll be out walking this afternoon, she decided. It had seemed as though the girl's presence would make things difficult, Henry had obviously hoped so when he had invited

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her, but by retiring early and leaving them to talk it had been managed. . . .

The voice shut off and Mrs. Searle gave zealous attention to the flowers once more. The clumps of lupins were massed like an overpainted sunset—anchovy, orange and lemon against skyblue—only the very top of their spikes had been bent and hung like dripping candles. The crests of the delphiniums were broken too, and the petals lay around pale iceblue and darkblue like scattered boat-race favours. Mrs. Searle shrank back as she surveyed the tall verbascums; their yellow flowers were covered in caterpillars, many of which had been drowned or smashed by the rain, their bodies now dried and blackening in the hot sun. "Miss Eccles, Miss Eccles" she called "are you good with caterpillars?"

A very tall young woman got up from a deck chair on the lawn and moved lopingly across to the flower bed; the white linen trousers seemed to accentuate her lumbering gait and her ungainly height; her thin white face was cut sharply by the line of her hard, vermilion lipstick; her straight, green-gold hair was worn long at the neck. "I'll see what I can do, Mrs. Searle" she said, and began rapidly to pick off the insects. "But you *are* good with caterpillars" said Miranda Searle. "It's a gift, of course, like being good with children. I'm glad to say that I hold each in equal abhorrence. Don't you think the verbascum very beautiful? I do, but then it's natural I *should* like them. I share their great quality of spikiness." If you were covered with caterpillars, thought Elspeth Eccles, I wouldn't budge an inch to remove them, I should laugh like hell. She had always believed that absolute sincerity was the only basis for human relationships, and she felt convinced that a little truth-telling would work wonders with Mrs. Searle's egotistical artificiality, but somehow she shrank from the experiment of telling her hostess what she really thought of her spikiness, there was no doubt that for all her futility and selfishness she was a little daunting. It was the difference of age, of course, and the unfair superiority of riches, but still she preferred to change the topic. "What are those red and blue flowers with the light foliage?" she asked. "Linum" replied Mrs. Searle. "You know—'Thou wilt not quench the burning flax, nor hurt the bruiséd reed,' only that doesn't sound quite right." "It certainly seems a little meaningless" commented Elspeth. "Oh! I should hope so" said Mrs. Searle. "It's religious. You

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surely wouldn't wish a religious sentiment to have a meaning. It wouldn't be at all edifying. I doubt if it would even be proper." Elspeth smiled to herself in the conviction of her own private creed. "No, it's the phrase 'bruiséd reed' that I detest" said Mrs. Searle. "It reminds me too much of 'broken reed.' Have you ever been in the W.V.S.?" she went on. "Oh blessed generation! Well, *I* have. Henry made me join the Oxford W.V.S. during the war, he said it was my duty. A curious sort of duty, I did nothing but serve cups of sweet dishwater to men with bad teeth. But what I was thinking of was the way all the women talked in clichés—throughout the winter they described themselves as 'chilly mortals,' and whenever anyone failed to do some particularly absurd task, as I frequently did, they call them 'broken reeds.' But I am keeping you from your work, Miss Eccles" she went on "and Henry will never forgive that. It must be wonderful for you both to have a common interest in so many vulgar people. Though perhaps in the case of the Shelley circle, as I believe it's called —it is Shelley you're working on?"—It was the seventh time in five days that she had asked the question, Elspeth noted—"as I say in the case of the Shelleys it is more their priggish refinement than their vulgarity that revolts me."

"Perhaps it's their basic honesty you dislike" said Elspeth. "Very likely" said Mrs. Searle "I hadn't realized that they were particularly honest. But if that were so, of course, I should certainly dislike it. How very nice it must be to know things, Miss Eccles, and go about hitting nails on the head like that. But seriously, you mustn't let me keep you from the Shelleys and their orgy of honesty." On Elspeth's assurance that she would like to remain with her, Mrs. Searle suggested that they should go together to gather gooseberries in the kitchen garden.

Elspeth watched her depart to collect a basin from the house. It was difficult, she thought, to believe that people had once spoken of her as the "incomparable Miranda." Of course the very use of such names suggested an affected gallantry for which the world no longer had time, but, apart from that, the almost Belsen-like emaciation of figure and features, the wild, staring eyes and the whispy hair that defied control hardly suggested a woman who had inspired poets and tempted young diplomats; a woman whose influence had reached beyond University society to the world of literary London, rivalling

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even Ottoline Morrell herself. A faint look of distressed beauty about the haggard eyes, an occasional turn of the head on that swanlike neck were all that remained to recall her famed beauty, and even these reminded one too much of the Lavery portraits. No, decidedly, she thought it was all too easily described by one of Mrs. Searle's own favourite words—"grotesque." Of the famous charm too, there were only rare flashes, and how like condescension it was when it came, as in some ornate fairy story of the 'nineties when the princess gives one glimpse of heaven to the poor poet as her coach passes by. That may have been how Rupert Brooke and Flecker liked things, but it wouldn't have done to-day. That crabbed irony and soured, ill natured malice, those carefully administered snubs to inferiors and juniors, could that have been the wit that had made her the friend of Firbank and Lytton Strachey? It seemed impossible that people could have tolerated such arrogance, have been content with such triviality. It was unfair, probably, to judge a galleon by a washed up wreck. There was no doubt that at some period Miranda Searle had strayed, was definitely *détraquée*. Even her old friends in Oxford had dropped her, finding the eccentricity, the egotism, the rudeness insupportable. But to Elspeth it seemed that such a decline could not be excused by personal grief, other mothers had had only sons killed in motor accidents and had lived again, other women had been confined to provincial lives and had kept their charity. It was monstrous that a man of the intellectual calibre of Henry Searle, a man whose work was so important should be chained to this living corpse. She had heard stories already of Mrs. Searle's secret drinking and had been told of some of the humiliating episodes in which she had involved her husband, but it was not until this visit to their Somerset cottage that she had realized how continuous, how slowly wearing his slavery must be. On the very first night she had heard from her bedroom a voice raised in obscenities, a maundering whine. She had guessed—how right she had been—that this was one of the famous drinking bouts. It had enabled her to see clearly why it was that Henry Searle was slowly withdrawing from University life, why the publication of the last volume of Peacock's letters was delayed from year to year, why the projected life of Mary Shelley remained a dream. It was her duty, she had decided then, to aid him in fighting the incubus, her duty to English letters, her return for all the help he had given to her own labours. But

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how difficult it was to help anyone so modest and retiring, anyone who had evaded life for so long. She had decided, at last, that it would be easier to start the other end, to put the issue fairly and squarely before Mrs. Searle herself. If there was any truth in the excuse of her defenders, if it was in fact the shock of her son's sudden death, then surely she could be made to see that the living could not be sacrificed to the dead in that way. And yet, and yet, one hesitated to speak, it was the last day of the visit and nothing had been said. "It's now or never, Elspeth Eccles" she said aloud.

"My dear, Miss Eccles" her hostess drawled. "How this cheers me! To hear you talk to yourself. I was just beginning to feel daunted. Here she is, I thought, the representative of the 'hungry generations' —straightforward, ruled by good sense, with no time for anything but the essential—and they're going to 'tread me down.' How can I? I thought, with all my muddled thinking and my inhibitions—only the other day that new, young physics tutor was telling me about them—how can I resist them? It seemed almost inhuman! And then I hear you talking to yourself. It's all right, I breathe again. The chink in another's armour, the mote in our brother's eyes, how precious they are! what preservers of Christian charity!" "That doesn't sound a very well-adjusted view of life" said Elspeth, in what she hoped was a friendly and humorous voice.

"Doesn't it?" said Miranda. "So many people say that to me and I'm sure you're all quite right. Only the words don't seem to connect in my mind and I do think that's so important, in deciding whether to think a thing or not, I mean. If I don't connect the words, then I just don't have the thought. And 'adjusted' never connects with 'life' for me, only with 'shoulder strap'."

With her wide-brimmed straw hat, flowing-sleeved chiffon dress, and her constantly shaking long earrings, Mrs. Searle looked like a figure at the Theatrical Garden Party. Laying down the box of Army and Navy Stores cigarettes which was her constant companion, she began rapidly to pick the gooseberries from the thorny bushes.

"Put them all into the bowl will you" she said, a cigarette hanging from the corner of her mouth. "I want Mrs. Parry to make a fool so we shall need a good number of them."

"Why do you need more to make a fool?" asked Elspeth. "Because of the sieving," said Miranda shortly and contemptuously.

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The two women picked on in silence for some minutes. To Elspeth, it seemed, that her own contribution was immensely the smaller; it seemed impossible that with those absurd, flowing sleeves and the smoke from that perpetual cigarette Mrs. Searle could pick with such ease. Her own fingers were constantly being pricked by the thorns and the legs of her trousers got caught against the bushes.

"Poor Miss Eccles!" said Miranda. "You must stop at once or you'll ruin those lovely trousers. It was quite naughty of me to have suggested your doing such a horrid job in such beautiful clothes." Elspeth was crouching to pick some refractory fruit from a very low bush, but she stood up and remained quite still for a moment, then in a clear, deliberate voice, she said:

"Now, you don't think they're beautiful clothes at all, Mrs. Searle. You probably think trousers on women are the height of ugliness, and in any case they cannot compare for elegance with your lovely dress. It's just that I'm clumsy and awkward in my movements, and you are graceful and easy. What makes you unable to say what you think of me?"

Mrs. Searle did not answer the question, instead she stared at the girl with rounded eyes, then throwing her cigarette on the ground she stamped it into the earth with her heel.

"Oh Miss Eccles" she cried "how lovely you look! Now I understand why Henry admires you so. You look so handsome, so noble when you are being stern, just like Mary Wollstonecraft or Dorothy Wordsworth or one of those other great women who inspire poets and philosophers."

"How can you say that, Mr. Searle?" cried Elspeth. "You who knew and inspired so many of our writers."

"Oh no!" said Miranda. "I never inspired anyone, I just kept them amused. I was far too busy enjoying life to *inspire* anyone."

"Then why can't you go on enjoying life now?" "Oh! Miss Eccles, how charming of you! I do believe you're paying me a compliment, you're being sincere with me and treating me as one of your generation. But you forget that 'you cannot teach an old dog new tricks.' And now look what you've done, you've made me use an ugly, vulgar proverb." "I don't think it's a question of generations" said Elspeth "it's just a matter of preferring to have things straight instead of crooked. Anyway if people of my age are more straightforward it's

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only because we've grown up in a world of wars and economic misery where there's only time for essentials."

Mrs. Searle looked at her with amusement. "If it comes to essentials" she said "elegance and beauty seem to me far more essential than wars."

"Of course they are" said Elspeth "but they can't have any reality until we've straightened out the muddle and misery in the world."

"In the world?" echoed Miranda. "I should have thought ones own private miseries were enough."

"Poor Mrs. Searle" said Elspeth "it must have hit you very badly. Were you very fond of him? Did they break the news clumsily? Won't you tell me about it?" And she wondered as she said it whether she did not sound a little too much as though she were speaking to a child, but after all the woman was a child emotionally, a child that was badly in need of re-education.

Miranda stopped picking for a minute and straightened herself; when she looked at Elspeth, she was laughing.

"Oh my dear Miss Eccles! I do believe you're trying to get me to 'share.' And I never even guessed that you were a Grouper."

"I'm not a Grouper" said Elspeth. "I'm not even what you would call religious, that is I don't believe in God" she added lamely.

But Miranda Searle took no notice. "Oh what fun!" she cried. "Now you can tell me all about those house-parties and the dreadful things that people confess to. I've always wanted to hear about that. I remember when the Dean of St. Mary's shared once. He got up in public and said that he'd slept with his niece. It wasn't true, of course, because I know for a fact that he's impotent. But still it was rather sweet of him, because she's a terribly plain girl and it gave her a sexual cachet that brought her wild successes. After that I went through Oxford inventing the most wonderful things that I said people had shared with me until I was threatened with libel by the entire Theological Faculty."

"Oh, it's quite impossible" said Elspeth and in her agitation she overturned the bowl of gooseberries. She felt glad to hide her scarlet face and her tears of vexation in an agitated attempt to pick them up.

"Oh please, please" said Miranda. "It couldn't matter less." At that moment the tweed-clothed knickerbockered figure of Mr. Searle

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came down the path towards them. "Henry" called his wife. "Henry, you never told me Miss Eccles was a 'Grouper.' She was just going to share with me, and it must have been something very exciting because it made her upset the gooseberries. Take her down to the pub for a drink. That's just the place for a good man to man sharing. Perhaps you can get that barmaid to tell you what goes on in Hodge's field, or Mr. Ratcliffe might even confess about that poor goat. Whatever you find out you must report to me at once."

Mr. Searle put down his glass of port, and drawing his handkerchief from the sleeve into which it was tucked, he carefully wiped his neatly trimmed grey moustache. With his well-worn dinner jacket and his old patent leather pumps he looked far more like a retired military man or an impoverished country squire than a Professor of English Poetry, and so he would have wished it. The evening had been hot and the French windows had been left open; a cool night breeze had begun to invade the room. Now that Mrs. Searle had gone upstairs Elspeth felt able to put her little blue woollen coat round her shoulders. She had decided to wear an evening dress as a concession to her host's formality, and yet it was largely the presence of her hostess with her long brocade gown that had kept her to the decision after the first evening. She felt sad that this was the last of their talks together—talks which she enjoyed all the more for the elegance of the room and the glass of kümmel which he was careful to pour out for her each evening, though she felt that to admit to such sensual pleasure was in some sense a capitulation to Miranda's influence in the house. But once her hostess had retired, the sense of strain was gone and she could adopt a certain hedonism as of her own right. No doubt he would have to face the same sordid scene tonight, no doubt he would have to face such bouts on and off until that woman died. She had failed lamentably this morning to achieve anything. But, at least, their discussions together had freed him from the strain, had allowed him to relax. I shall try once more, she thought, to make him talk about it, to impress upon him that his work is too important to be shelved for someone else's selfishness, that he must assert himself. This time I must act more subtly, less directly.

"There seems no doubt" she said "that the Naples birth certificate is genuine. A child was born to Shelley by some one other

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than Mary, and that person could hardly have been Claire Clairemont, despite all Byron's ugly gossip. The question is who was the mother?"

"Yes" said Professor Searle. "It's a mystery which I don't suppose will be solved, like many others in Shelley's life. I sometimes doubt whether we have any right to solve them. Oh! don't think I'm denying the importance of the biographical element in literary appreciation. I know very well how much a full knowledge of a writer's life, yes, I suppose even of his unconscious life, adds to the interpretation of his work; particularly, of course, with any writers so fundamentally subjective as the Romantics. But I'm more and more disinclined to expose skeletons that have been so carefully buried. I suppose it's a reticence that comes with old age" he added.

"I doubt if it's a defensible standpoint" said Elspeth. "Think of the importance of Mary Shelley's relations with Hogg and with Peacock, what a lot they explain of Shelley's own amoral standpoint towards married fidelity. Or again, how much of Leigh Hunt's instability and failure can be put down to the drain of his wife's secret drinking."

"Yes, I suppose so" said Professor Searle. "But when one appreciates a man's work deeply, it means in the long run respecting him and respecting his wishes. You see it isn't only the revealing of facts that have been carefully hidden, it's our interpretation that may be so vitally wrong, that would hurt the dead so. We blame Mary for her infidelity and Mrs. Hunt for her insobriety, but who knows if that is not exactly the thing that Shelley and Hunt would most have hated? Who knows if they did not hold themselves responsible?"

Elspeth spoke quite abruptly. "Do you hold yourself responsible for *your* wife's drinking?" she asked.

Professor Searle drained his glass of port slowly, then he said "I've been afraid that this would happen. I think you have made a mistake in asking such a question. Oh! I know you will say I am afraid of the truth, but I still think there are things that are better left unsaid. But now that you have asked me I must answer—yes, in a large degree, yes."

"How? how?" asked Elspeth impatiently.

"My wife was a very beautiful woman and a very brilliant one. Not the brilliance that belongs to the world of scholars, the narrow

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and often pretentious world of Universities, but to a wider society of people who act as well as think. Don't imagine that I do not fully recognize the defects of this wider world—it is an arrogant world, placing far too great a value upon what it vaguely calls 'experience,' too often resorting to action to conceal its poor and shoddy thinking; as a young scholar married to a woman of this world its faults were all too apparent to me. Nevertheless, however I may have been a fish out of water there, it was her world and because I was afraid of it, because I did not shine there, I cut her off from it, and in so doing I embittered her, twisted her character. There were other factors, of course, the shock of our boy's death did not help, and then there were other things" he added hurriedly "things perhaps more important."

"Well, I think that's all fudge" said Elspeth. "You have something important to give and you've allowed her selfish misery to suck your vitality until now it is doubtful whether you will ever write any more."

"I am going to do the unforgivable" said Prof. Searle. "I am going to tell you that you are still very young. I doubt if my wife's tragedy has prevented me from continuing to write, though I *could* excuse my laziness in that way. What takes place between my wife and me has occurred so often now, the pattern is so stereotyped, that, awful though it may be, my mind, yes, and my feelings have become hardened to the routine. To you, even though it is only guessed at, or perhaps for that very reason, it will seem far more awful than it can ever again seem to me. That is why, although I had hoped that your visit might help the situation, I soon realized that pleasant as it has been and I shall always remember our discussions, the presence of a third person, the possibility that you might be a spectator was weighing upon me heavily." He lit a cigarette and sat back in silence. Why did I say that? he thought, I ought first to have crossed my fingers. So far we have avoided any scene in the presence of this girl, but by mentioning the possibility I was tempting Providence. This evening too, when the danger is almost over, and yet so near, for Miranda had clearly already been drinking when dinner was served, and these scenes come about so suddenly.

"Well, my dear" he said "I think we had better retire. Don't worry, perhaps I shall finish the Peacock letters this long vacation. Who knows? I've got plenty of notes and plenty of time. And, please,

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whatever I may have said, remember that your visit has been a most delightful event in my life."

But he had made his decision too late. In the doorway stood Miranda Searle, swaying slightly, her face flushed, her hand clutching the door lintel in an effort to steady herself.

"Still sharing?" she asked in a thick voice, then she added with a coarse familiarity. "You'll have to stop bloody soon or we'll never get to sleep." Her husband got up from his chair. "We're just coming" he said quietly. Miranda Searle leant against the doorway and laughed; points of light seemed to be dancing in her eyes as malice gleamed forth. "Darling" she drawled in her huskiest tones "the 'we' sounds faintly improper, or are we to carry the sharing principle to the point of bed?"

Elspeth hoisted her great height from the chair and stood awkwardly regarding her hostess for a second. "That's a very cheap and disgusting remark" she said. Henry Searle seemed to have lost all life, he bent down and touched a crack in his patent leather slippers. But the malicious gleam in Miranda's eyes faded, leaving them cold and hard. "Washing dirty linen in public is disgusting" she said, and as she spoke her mouth seemed to slip sideways. "Not that's there much to share. You're welcome to it all. He's no great cop, you know." She managed by the force of her voice to make the slang expression sound like an obscenity. "I pumped one kid out of him, but it finished him as a man."

Professor Searle seemed to come alive again, his hand went out in protest; but his resurrection was too slow, before he could cross the room Elspeth had sprung from her chair. Towering over the other woman she slapped her deliberately across the face, then putting her hands on her shoulders she began to shake her.

"You ought to be put away" she said. "Put away where you can do no more harm."

Miranda Searle lurched to get free of the girl's grasp, her long bony hands came up to tear at the girl's arms, but in moving she caught her heel in the rose brocade skirt and slipped ridiculously to the ground. The loss of dignity seemed to remove all her fury, she sat in a limp heap, the tears streaming from her eyes. "If they'd left me my boy, he wouldn't have let this happen to me," she went on repeating. Her husband helped her to her feet and, taking her by

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the elbow, he led her from the room. Elspeth could hear her voice moaning in the corridor. "Why did they take him away? What have I done to be treated in this way?" and the Professor's voice soothing, pacifying, reassuring.

It was many weeks later when Elspeth returned to Oxford. She spent the first evening of term with Kenneth Orme, the Steffansson Reader in Old Norse, also an ex-pupil of Professor Searle. To him she felt able to disclose the whole story of that fateful evening.

" . . . I didn't wait to see either of them the next morning" she ended. "I just packed my bag and stole out. I do not wish ever to see her again, and he, I felt, would have been embarrassed. It may be even that I have had to sacrifice his friendship in order to help." Elspeth hoped that her voice sounded calm, that Kenneth could not guess what this conclusion meant to her. "All the same whatever the cost I think it did some good. Drunk as she was I think she realized that there were some people with whom she could not play tricks, who were quite prepared to give her what she deserved. At any rate, it let a breath of fresh air into a very fetid atmosphere."

Kenneth Orme looked at her with curiosity. "Breaths of air can be rather dangerous" he said. "People catch chills from them, you know, and sometimes they are fatal chills."

"Oh, no fear of that with Miranda Searle" said Elspeth. "I wish there was, but she's far too tough."

"I wasn't thinking of Mrs. Searle" replied Kenneth. "I was thinking of the Professor. He's not returning this term, you know. He's had a complete breakdown."

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ET DONA FERENTES

"I'll have a cigarette too, Mother" said Monica to Mrs. Rackham "it'll help to keep the midges off. That's why I always hate woods so. Oh don't worry, Elizabeth" she added as she saw her own daughter's look of alarm. "That's why I *hate* woods, but there are hundreds and hundreds of more important reasons why I *love* them —especially pine woods. To begin with there's the scent, and *you* can say what you like, Edwin" she smiled up at her husband, who was frowning as he cut inexpertly at a block of wood with a pocket knife "about its being a hackneyed smell. But apart from the scent, there's the effect of light and shade. The only time that you can really see the sunlight out of doors is when it shines through dark trees like these. When you're in it, you're always too hot or too dazzled to notice anything. So you see, darling" she turned again to her daughter "I *do* love pinewoods." For a moment she lay back, but the smoke from her cigarette got into her eyes and soon she was stubbing it out on the bed of pine-needles beneath. "How I *do* hate cigarettes" she cried "and how I *do* hate hating them. It puts one at such a social disadvantage. Oh! it's all right for you, Mother, everyone in your generation smoked, and *smoked* determinedly; and it's all right for Elizabeth, when she's eighteen—don't let's talk of it there's only two years—nobody will even think of smoking, it'll be so dowdy; but with women in the forties like me there was always that awful choice —to smoke or not to smoke—and I chose not to, and there I am of course on occasions like parties and things with nothing to do with my hands. Now let's all lie back and relax for a quarter of an hour" she went on and the nervous tension in her voice seemed even greater than before as she said it "and then we can have a drink before lunch. Don't you think it was clever of me to remember to bring gin? People *always* forget it on picnics and yet it's so lovely to be able to have a drink without needing to be jolly. I hope nobody is going to be jolly, by the way. I forbid anyone to be jolly," she said with mock sternness and then turning to her son who was watching a squirrel in a nearby tree "Richard, darling, take that knife away from your father before he does himself an injury."

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"It wouldn't be a very serious injury, Mother, and then Elizabeth could show her prowess as a First Aider or whatever they're called in the Guides" said Richard, but nevertheless he moved slowly towards his father. Before he could offer assistance, however, a tall fair-haired youth had sprung forward.

"Allow me, please, Mr. Newman" he said, the stiffness of his foreign English relieved by the charm and intimacy of his smile "I am very able to cut wood with these kind of knives."

"That's very kind of you, Sven" said Monica "there you are, darlings, you see, Sven has manners. I'm surprised you weren't able to learn a few, Richard, when you were staying with him in Sweden. I'm afraid we lost all our manners here while we were busy fighting the war."

Two sharp points of red glowed suddenly on the Swedish boy's high cheekbones and his already slanting eyes narrowed and blinked.

Edwin Newman glared angrily at his wife, his prominent Adam's apple jerking convulsively above his open-necked shift. He placed a hand on Sven's shoulder.

"You have given us so many useful lessons since you arrived, Sven, if you use the same charm to re-educate us in everyday courtesy, we shall be fortunate" he said.

"You are too kind to say these many good things to me, Mr. Newman" replied the boy "I hope I shall not quite fail to deserve them."

"You two ought to be talking in Latin" said Richard "You sound like Dr. Johnson, Dad, when he met famous foreign scholars. By the way, Grannie, have you been getting at Sven about his reading? I can't persuade him to read anything decent like De Quincey or Dickens or Coleridge. He seems to think for some reason or other that he's got to wade through 'Rasselas' in order to 'appreciate literature' as he calls it. I must say I shouldn't have thought even you would have inflicted that torture upon anyone."

Mrs. Rackham's heavy square-jawed face lost its look of grimness for a moment as she spoke to her beloved grandson.

"I am delighted to hear of a blow being struck at this neo-romantic nonsense. Like Miss Deborah I think that nothing but good can arise from reading the works of the great Lexicographer. Continue to read Rasselas," she said to Sven "and you may yet know what

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the English language should really sound like. Take no notice of Richard's attempts to lure you into reading Dickens. He only wants you to fall under a railway train like a famous English retired officer, Captain Brown, whose unhealthy interest in Boz led him to that horrid end."

"That just shows how little you understand about it, Grannie. Captain Brown was reading Pickwick and Pickwick's nothing to do with the real Dickens. Anyhow it was Pickwick in weekly parts which couldn't happen now."

"Isn't it time you two stopped all this Who's Who in Literature" said Edwin. "In any case, if Sven's going to waste his time on novels surely he might read modern authors like Huxley or even Lawrence."

"Dear Edwin" replied Mrs. Rackham "Even I know that Huxley or even Lawrence" and she imitated her son-in-law's hesitant tones "daring though they may be are not *modern* authors."

"In any case I am reading Rasselas because it is demanded for the higher examination. I am not really so greatly interested to read books." Sven lay back and stretched his arms out to a spot where the sunlight had broken through "I think I prefer more to follow outdoor games when the sun shines, like Elizabeth does" and he smiled lazily towards the clearing where Elizabeth was staking little wooden sticks around a clump of late bluebells.

Seen upside down it's more like a cat's than a satyr's, thought Edwin.

Elizabeth only scowled. "This isn't an outdoor game" she said "I'm just messing around. Come down to the stream with me, Mummie" she called.

"May I come too?" said Mrs. Rackham. Elizabeth gave no answer but Monica looked pleased and held out her hand to assist her mother from the ground. The family likeness showed clearly as they walked away—three generations—hand in hand.

"It's the most lovely stream, Mummie" said Elizabeth, squeezing Monica's arm. "I wish we had it all for our own."

"Yes" said Monica "I would plant Japanese irises here—the dark purple kind with the spear-like leaves to contrast with the yellow flags. It's funny how profuse Nature is with yellow, now if I had made the Universe I should have had much more contrast of colour

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and more subtlety too with wild flowers. I wonder if fritillary would grow here, the place could do with something a bit more strange."

"But Mummie, it would be awful to change it when it's so beautiful."

"I don't think so, darling" said Monica "I don't know, of course, but I've always thought that was a false sort of romanticism. I don't believe you really become aware of the beauty of a scene until you see how it could be made more beautiful. What do you think, Mother?"

Mrs. Rackham smiled. "I think I just see the stream and the meadows behind" she said "and then I feel a great sense of peace and solitude."

"Oh yes, that of course" cried her daughter "but there's something else too. You have to look at it properly surely to see the patterns of shape and colour and that's when you see what's needed to complete them." She thought for a moment, then added "Yes, I'm sure you have to do that, otherwise it's all a blur and you don't really see anything."

"Look, Mummie, those holes" cried Elizabeth "I think there must be badgers. If you were here at night you would see them come down to drink."

"I should like that" said Monica "When there was no moon—at dusk or dawn—with black water and those nightmare deformed willow-trees and then lumbering grey shapes coming down to drink. But not by moonlight, that would be too expected."

"We've been imagining the badgers drinking in the stream" said Elizabeth to her father when they returned.

"Is that one of Brock's nightly prowls?" asked Edwin.

"No, darling," replied Monica "*not* Brock and *not* nightly prowls. Just badgers drinking. There were rabbits, too, but they weren't wearing skyblue shorts, they were just brown rabbits with white tails." Then seeing her husband's hurt expression, she put her hand on his arm. "Never mind, darling," she said "You like imagining in that whimsical way, I don't; but I think it's only because I don't know how to."

Edwin smiled. "How about that gin you were talking about?" he asked.

"It's in the shaker, darling, with some French. You do the shaking, you're so professional."

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Indeed with his boyish face and long black hair, dressed in a saxeblue Aertex shirt and navy blue Daks Edwin looked very much like some barman from a smart bar in Cannes or like some cabaret turn. He seemed almost to be guying the part as he waved the shaker to and fro, dancing up and down, and singing grotesquely "Hold that Tiger."

"Idiot" cried Monica, and, relenting further, she turned to Sven "Do respectable fathers of families ever behave so absurdly in Sweden?"

"I do not imagine Mr. Newman a father of a family, I imagine him to have continual youth."

Monica turned away sharply. "At eighteen, of course, one can imagine so many ridiculous things" she said.

But Edwin ended his dance with a mock bow.

"The spirit of youth is infectious" he declared. Sven lay back and laughed with delight, showing his regular, white teeth.

It was while they were eating their lunch that Edwin got on to his hobby horse.

"There's supposed to be a Saxon camp across on that hill over there" he said, pointing to the East. "If my theory is right it may well be an example of a Saxon settlement existing alongside a British one."

He was so used to a completely silent audience that he was quite startled when Sven said "Can that really be?"

"I believe so, but it's a view which is only gradually gaining ground" said Edwin and he looked across at Sven who sat clasping his legs, with his knees up to his chin, staring seriously before him. It's like talking to Pan, he thought, and he went on hurriedly "Of course the whole of this Thames Valley area is very important from the point of view of Saxon migrations. It's almost certain that a great part of the inhabitants of Wessex came from the East and crossed the river near here at Dorchester."

"But that is most interesting" said Sven. "Do you really think so?" asked Elizabeth and then turning away contemptuously she added "I don't believe you know anything about it."

"That is true" said the boy "but your father makes the story so alive."

"If you're really interested we might go to the edge of the wood and see the hill from a closer vantage point," suggested Edwin.

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Sven was on his feet immediately. "I should like that so much" he exclaimed.

"Are you coming, Richard?" asked his father, but Richard was deep in a first reading of *The Possessed* and merely shook his head.

Mr. Newman bounded lightly across the treetrunks that lay in the path, his sandals thumping against his heels.

"Of course when I say that Saxons and British dwelt side by side, I don't deny that there *were* cases of horrible violence" they could hear him saying, and Sven's answering voice replying "But violence, I think, is often so beautiful."

"How happy Edwin seems" said Mrs. Rackham to her daughter. "That boy's quite right, he *has* got the spirit of 'continual youth' as he called it."

Monica made no answer. "I'm going down to the stream again" she said.

"I've never seen him look so young and gay" went on Mrs. Rackham.

"How funny" said her daughter, as she walked away. "I was just thinking how absurd he looked, like a scout-master or something."

If I was one of those Virginia Woolf mothers, thought Mrs. Rackham, I should have been told what all this means long ago. It's much better as it is, however, she decided. Fond as I am of Monica, I wouldn't be able to help, whatever may be wrong. She has no power of resignation, no ability to seek refuge, she insists on fighting, on living even when life is unpleasant. Edwin, too, has that same total absorption in the affair of the moment. They want to wring every drop out of life. She smiled as she thought how they must despise her for living so much in books. A secondhand life they would probably call it. I prefer to have my people pre-digested, she decided, its easier, yes and wiser. To-day's undercurrents, for instance, how wearying! . . . and life was so short. She turned to her book, then laughed out loud as it came to her how little even she profited from her reading. Let me remember Miss Woodhouse's folly in interfering in the affairs of others she said, and began her twenty-third reading of *Emma*.

Monica took the lime-green coat she was carrying over her arm

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and placed it on a large white stone by the edge of the stream. Then she sat down and rippled her fingers through the water. Every now and again she dabbed her forehead or smoothed her eyelids with her wet fingers. The afternoon had become intensely hot, there seemed to be no breath of air anywhere. Overhead, mosquitoes and midges hummed so that she was forced to pluck some wild mint from the stream to attempt to drive them away. The mint grew so shallowly that the whole plant came away suddenly as she touched it, and mud from the roots splashed over her white dress. Everything seemed discordant to her—the yellow green of her coat against the emerald grass, the crimson ribbons of the large straw hat which lay at her side against a clump of pink campion. Suddenly she saw a creature slithering up the trunk of an old tree, a creature brown-grey like the tree itself—it was a tree-creeper, but for a moment the little bird seemed to her like a rat. The rusty bullocks further up the stream stamped and swished their tails as they tried to drive the horseflies from their dung-caked flanks. There were always creatures like that who lived upon dirt, who nosed it out and unearthed it, however deeply it was hidden, however long, yes, even though all trace of it seemed vanished for twenty years, she thought. A shallow, vain, egocentric creature like that, with those untrustworthy, mocking cat's eyes. Twenty years ago, when they were first married and Edwin had told her, she had been so anxious to help. There had been incidents, it was true, but they had been so unimportant and they had become closer through fighting them together. But now after twenty years she felt she could do nothing; her pride was too hurt. All this fortnight, since the holiday began, she had been telling herself it could not be true and yet she knew she was not mistaken, to-day especially she felt sure of it. What could have altered things to make it possible? she reflected. It was true that she had been a bit uncertain in her feelings herself this year, but Edwin had understood so well that it was change of life that was coming to her early. Change of life had such strange results, that must be it—she seized on the idea eagerly—it was all fancy. How horrible that anything purely physical could make one believe such things and how cruel to Edwin that she had indulged them. How cruelly she had behaved, even it it was true, and somehow she felt again that it was. She had withdrawn her sympathy at the very moment Edwin needed it most: it was easy enough to realize that

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with one's mind, she thought, but the emotional revulsion was so great after twenty years' forgetfulness that she might only overcome it when events had moved beyond her reach. Whatever happens, she thought, I shall be so much to blame; and to Elizabeth who came running towards her along the bank of the stream she said aloud,

"If anything should go wrong, darling, in our lives, always remember I am to blame. I hadn't the courage to do as I should."

The moment she had said it she could have bitten her tongue out. The child was already too inclined to histrionics in this new phase of schoolgirl religious enthusiasm through which she was passing. Monica's fears were quite justified, Elizabeth rose at once to the situation, though she had no idea of the meaning of her mother's words.

"Brave Mummie" she said, putting her hand on Monica's arm.

Monica spoke almost harshly "No, darling, *not* brave Mummie. Self-dramatizing Mummie, if you like, Mummie who's got the heroine's part quite pat at rehearsals and in the wings, but who always fluffs her words when it comes to the night. Anything you like, my dear, but not *brave* Mummie."

Mummie's so strange and sarcastic sometimes, thought Elizabeth, anyone but me might think she was bitter, but I know her better. I know how brave and true and kind she is. I understand Daddy too, how much he needs my love. Richard never thinks about anything but his old books, so I have to help both of them. It's a kind of secret I have with myself—and God, she thought quickly. God loves and knows them all, even Grannie though she laughs at him. It's true what Miss Anstruther says—life's ever so exciting for anyone who's found Him; always something new and worthwhile to do, not just silly messing around with boys like Penelope Black and all those drips. That's what Sven wants, a lot of silly girls swooning about over him, like soppy Sinatra. That's what he would like from me, for all he keeps on saying I'm only a kid, but there's no time for waste of time Miss Anstruther says. I wish Sven hadn't come here, it's all been beastly since he did. It's ever since he came that Mummy's been snappy and Daddy keeps on showing off, not that it's for Sven, he wouldn't want to show off for a little pipsqueak like him. I oughtn't to talk like that about him, I must learn to love him. Love everyone, pray for them and set a good example that's all we can do. I can help all of them even Sven if I show how Christ wants us to live.

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People don't say so, but they're watching us Christians all the time, Miss Anstruther says. Ye are the salt of the Earth. A City that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

Monica's voice suddenly broke into her daughter's thoughts.

"Look, darling! On that larch tree there. See? A jay." There, indeed very close at hand sat a jay preening its rose feathers, its pastel shades harmonizing delicately with the soft green caterpillars of the larch. Suddenly it rose, with a flash of blue-green wing feathers, and flew off, screaming harshly. Immediately all the birds in the wood seemed to break into chattering. A cold wind blew across the stream. Monica shivered and drew her coat round her shoulders. "I think there's a storm coming up, darling" she said. "Let's go back to Grannie."

"I think there's a storm coming up, but I'm glad we came all the same" said Edwin, as, somewhat out of breath, he reached the crest of the hills. "We've gone much farther than I ever intended, but the time's passed so quickly in talking. I'm afraid the others may get rather anxious, but still I think one has a right to enjoy oneself in one's own way sometimes, don't you?" Then not waiting for answer he continued "The Saxon settlement must have run right across the chain to the left here. Down below, you see, is Milkford, the outskirts run right up to the foot of the hills. It's quite an important town still, a sort of watering place, but it was even more important in medieval times. Of course there's nothing earlier, really, than thirteenth century" he said apologetically "but the castle's quite interesting—fifteenth century, you know, when the fortress is turning into the country house. We might run down and look at it later, would you like that?" he asked.

"That would be most nice" said Sven "but for some minutes I should like to rest here, please. The heat renders me most tired" and indeed beads of sweat were trickling down his brown chest where the line of his shirt lay open almost to his stomach.

Edwin turned away. "Yes, you lie there a bit while I explore round the place" but he did not move far off. Suddenly Sven broke the silence.

"That is so lovely, your signet-ring. I should much like one of the same kind" he said.

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"Would you?" said Edwin. "We must see what we can do about it."

Sven did not answer. It was nice to lie here in the sun and to feel that one was being watched, admired. It was boring staying with these Newmans. Richard, with his books had been bad enough at home, but there it did not matter, if he did not choose to come out swimming or skiing with the girls, he could be left behind. But here there were no girls, no sports, only books and talking and talking. He had hoped to watch the English girls bathing and to go dancing with them; they were said to be prudish, but all the same he was usually very irresistible. They would have run their hands through his hair like Karen, who looked so pretty when her own hair blew across her face and she smiled with those white teeth through the salt spray; or they would have stroked his fine brown legs as Sigrid when she buried them in sand and he brought his face close to her firm white breasts showing through her costume; or perhaps even an English girl more bold than the others would lie naked and soft under him on the sand like little Lili who had licked the salt sweat from his chest when he had done his part with her—different girls, but all of them, all of them wanting him as he had a right to be wanted, so handsome he felt that sometimes he almost wanted himself. But here there were no girls only books and talking. He had hoped much of Richard's sister, but she was only a child of sixteen and even so she was taken up with some rubbish about religion. With Mrs. Newman, too, he had thought he might have so much fun, after all she was not so old as Mrs. Thomas, the American woman, who had taken him out to cabarets and dances and given him presents last year when he was only seventeen. It had been most pleasant and he had learned from her so much that was useful. But this bitch treated him as though he was a child, it made him so glad that now he could hurt her. Even if Richard had made him his hero like Ekki Blomquist who followed him around with admiring eyes, little Ekki whom he liked to protect and pet and tease—but Richard thought only of his books. No, it was only Mr. Newman who had been kind to him and who admired him. He looked so gay and fine for forty-seven, he would be very pleased if he could look so at that age. But all the same it was very disturbing, it would not be pleasant if so kind a man should behave stupidly, it would be necessary to be very polite and very

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firm. For a little while still it would be nice to continue to be admired, also he would like to have the present of the ring, also he would like to make that bitch unhappy. Not that he liked to be naughty but it was not pleasant when one was not admired. What strange little white shells there were on the ground, like little Lili's ears, or his own curls when they fell from the nape of his neck at the barber's shop.

The same little crustacea lay all around Edwin, pressed into the soft ground by the tightly winding mesh of mossgrass. Little balls of rabbit droppings were scattered here and there. The hillside was carpet-smooth but for an occasional red and yellow vetch that rose above the even level. Edwin peered closely at the turf, but he noticed nothing for his thoughts were far away.

If only I could collect my ideas, thought Edwin, but the blood pounds so at my temples. If only I could piece together how it had all led up to this. I think I have been feeling shut in by them all for a long time now, at any rate all this year. Richard with his books and Elizabeth with this priggish religious talk, and lately even Monica has seemed to be so sure of her values, so determinedly living in a world of beauty. All the best that's written, only the actions God approves, only the most beautiful in nature and art—it almost sickens me at times. It all seems to come out in their lack of charity to Sven. I wanted so to be kind to him, to show him that he was wanted, to make up for their priggish lack of courtesy. I understood what they meant when they said he was materialistic, animal, superficial, vain—but in some degree I felt that I was too and I wanted them to realize that. The children will always be afraid of physical pleasure in sex, afraid of their own bodies' lusts, afraid of the lusts of others for them. It's worse, somehow, when Mrs. Rackham's here because I can see the stunted, shy, self-satisfied life they're heading for. But Monica is different, all the years she has understood my feelings about it, and at times has shared in them gloriously, but recently she's changed, "trying to put sex in its perspective" she would call it, but that's only another name for avoiding it because it's distasteful. It's true she's given me this physical reason but she said it so eagerly that it seemed like an excuse for doing what she's wanted to do for years. And now this has happened. What I thought to be kindness and sympathy for a rebel has re-awakened the old feeling of twenty years ago, the old

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sensual pattern of Gilbert and Heinrich and Bernard and the others, only more violently as it seems, and the blood is pulsing in my head as it used to then, only more loudly.

Suddenly he heard himself saying in a clear, artificial voice "I'm so glad that we should have become such good friends, Sven, and I hope you are too. I don't expect you realize what a very lonely man I am in some ways. Oh! I know how lucky I am in my family, but they're terribly narrow, I felt perhaps that you were feeling that too. Richard, for example" by now Edwin was talking at break neck speed "he lives in books, takes no pleasure in the life around him. Now you must find that very strange, being so strong and lithe and well-made. Yes I'm afraid the truth of the matter is that my family are all what we call in England kill-joys, that is they get no real fun out of life. That's what I've so admired about you, you obviously get so *much* fun out of life. I think it's probably because I've allowed my wife to dominate the family so. You'll think it funny of me to say so, but I'm not really very much of a woman's man. I think women are inclined rather to be kill-joys. Do *you* think so?"

"Do I?" said Sven "do I think that women kill joy? No, oh no. Certainly not that" and he began to shake with laughter, but seeing Edwin's face twisted with combined excitement and alarm he controlled his amusement and added "but I think I so well understand what you may mean, you must tell me about this. But not here, I think, for it is now getting so dark and a rain spot has fallen on my face so that I think there will be a storm. Shall you not tell me in the town down there?"

"Of course!" said Edwin eagerly and he began to clamber down the hill. "We'll go into Milkford and I'll ring up from there to say we've been caught by the storm. If we can't get a car we may have to stay the night there. You won't mind that, will you? It'll give us a real chance to get to know each other, and they say the Bull's really a very decent old pub."

At first there had only been a few heavy drops of rain falling through the trees in the wood. Richard, who had reached the death of Stefan Trofimovich, positively refused to move, and even Mrs. Rackham who was being once more horrified and entranced by the vulgarity of Mrs. Elton preferred to take no notice. Then quite sud-

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denly the storm had burst over their heads—the picnic things all shook under the blast of the thunder-clap and the whole wood was lit up by a great fork of lightning which seemed to strike obliquely at the nearby stream. Before a second and more deafening thunder-clap had sounded, Mrs. Rackham had jumped to her feet.

"Come on, Richard, pack up the picnic basket. We mustn't stay under these trees with this lightning about. Make for the car and the clearing. Help me with the rugs, Elizabeth. Monica," she called "don't stand there, my dear, we'll all get drenched soon if we don't move, apart from the danger of the lightning."

But Monica stood a little away from them, her face chalk-white and her eyes round with terror. As the next fork of lightning zigzagged viciously in front of them she began to scream.

"Edwin, Edwin! My God! where are you? Oh pray God nothing happens. We must find him, we must find him" and she turned and ran down the little path. She had hardly gone a few paces when she tripped on a tree root and fell on her face, bruising her cheek and cutting the side of her chin.

Richard made as though to move towards her and then blushing scarlet, turned in the direction of the car. But already Elizabeth had run to her mother and, throwing herself on her she sobbed.

"Mummie, darling, Mummie darling, let's go away from this place."

"For heaven's sake, Monica," said Mrs. Rackham "pull yourself together. You're scaring the child out of her wits." She took her daughter's arm and started to pull her to her feet, but Monica pulled her arm away roughly. "We must find him" she said and began to weep bitterly.

"Stop this at once" said Mrs. Rackham sternly "Edwin's perfectly capable of looking after himself" and she led her sobbing daughter to the car. By now the rain was pouring down. Monica's fashionable hair style was washed across on to her face and strands of hair got stuck to the cut on her chin, meanwhile the blood ran down on to the white dress beneath. As they came to the clearing there was a blinding flash of lightning, followed by a crash. In a few moments smoke was ascending from the other side of the stream—one of the larches had been struck.

"*You* must drive, Richard" said Mrs. Rackham. "Your mother's

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not at all well" and she helped her daughter into the back, as she did so she heard her mumbling "Oh God! don't let it happen! Oh God! don't let it happen!" That any daughter of mine should be superstitious over a storm, she thought.

"It's lucky, there's only the four of us this time" said Richard, as he started the car.

Elizabeth kicked his leg. "You silly, thoughtless idiot, don't let Mummie hear you" she said.

I've failed again, thought Richard. When I was reading about Stefan Trofimovich's death, I wanted to be there so that I could make him happy, to tell him that for all his faults I knew he was a good man. But when my own mother is in trouble I can't say anything. It all sounds allright in books, but when I see people's faces—all that redness, wetness and ugliness and the noises they make—I feel ashamed for them and then I'm speechless and that makes me angry and I say cruel things. It was just like that when Sven was unhappy over that girl, I wanted to be his friend as Alyosha was to Kolya, to tell him that I knew he was often bad, but that I didn't mind but it was no good because I couldn't show my sympathy. I shall always live like this, cut off, although I think I understand more clearly than others. But how can I speak to Mother of her fears about Sven and that they are absurd? No I must always be shut in like this.

Nevertheless when they arrived home, he took his mother's arm. "Don't worry, darling, nothing could happen I'm sure" he whispered. But Monica did not hear him, she was listening to the maid.

"Mr. Newman phoned, ma'am, to say that he and Mr. Sodeblom are stranded at Milkford and will be staying the night."

Monica walked straight into the drawing-room and sat, with set face, upon the sofa. "I am very tired, my dears, I'll have my dinner in my room. Mother would you be very kind and see Agnes in the kitchen, I don't want to be worried."

Richard and Elizabeth began to speak at once, as Mrs. Rackham went from the room.

"Can I get you some books, Mother?"

"Shall I help you to undress, Mummie?"

But such offers were premature, for at that moment a car sounded in the drive outside and a few minutes later Edwin rushed breathlessly into the room.

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"Oh! you're here before us" he exclaimed "So you got my message. As the storm cleared, I thought it wasn't necessary to stay the night."

Sven had come into the room very quietly behind Edwin and now his voice sounded, speaking very slowly.

"Mr. Newman was so kind, he was so anxious that I should stay and see Milkford. But I thought you would be alarmed at our absence, Mrs. Newman. See, however, he has bought me this lovely ring, the stone has so strange a name—garnet. But he has not forgotten you, Mrs. Newman" and as Edwin motioned him to be silent, he went on "But, no, Mr. Newman, you must show your wife the gift or she will be upset that you gave me so lovely a ring and nothing for her. Look, it is a beautiful sapphire pendant, is it not a lovely stone? I chose it for you myself, I have a great taste for jewels."

Monica got to her feet. "It is a pity" she said "that you speak such ghastly English. You say unfortunate things that a boy of your age cannot understand" and she walked from the room.

A few moments later Mrs. Rackham returned. "Look" said Sven "at the lovely pendant the kind Mr. Newman has bought for Mrs. Newman."

"Oh! but Edwin how sweet of you! It's charming looking" said his mother-in-law.

"But Mrs. Newman does not at all seem to like it" said Sven.

"Oh! she will to-morrow" said Mrs. Rackham "she's very overtired to-night, the storm upset her a lot."

The rainfall ceased after dinner and there was a calming silence as Monica sat before her dressing table, talking to her mother. Suddenly Edwin came into the room. He began to talk quickly as though he feared interruption.

"I've been talking to the children" he said "and Sven thinks he ought to return home by the next boat—that is in three days—I think he's right probably. He's got his exams coming on and I don't know that it's been quite his sort of holiday or" and he laughed "that we're exactly his sort of family."

Monica said nothing, but Mrs. Rackham declared approvingly "I'm sure it's a very wise decision."

"I'm glad you think so" he said "because I was wondering if you'd mind looking after the three of them until he goes. I've sudden-

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ly remembered *Don Giovanni* comes off next week and it may not be done again for some time." He put his hand on his wife's shoulder. "Would you like to go up to the flat for two nights on our own?" he asked.

Monica nodded her head. "Yes, darling" she said "I would."

"You'll have to wear that new pendant to celebrate" said Mrs. Rackham.

"No" said Monica "I shan't do that. I don't think I shall ever wear that pendant. And now" she said gathering her dressing-gown around her "I must go and see that all Sven's clothes are properly mended. I can't have Mrs. Sodeblom thinking we didn't look after the child, she was so good to Richard" and she swept from the room.

Safe, thought Edwin, safe, thank God! But the room seemed without air, almost stifling. He threw open one of the windows and let in a refreshing breeze that blew across from the hills.

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Louis Martin-Chauffier

PROUST AND THE DOUBLE "I" OF TWO CHARACTERS

Proust once remarked to Gide, who was speaking of his memoirs, "You can tell everything but only on condition that you never use the word 'I' "—and Gide comments: "This does not suit me at all." The author of the *Journal* refrains from adding that this is rather strange advice, coming as it does from a writer whose monumental work is written in the first person. For, as he is doubtless aware, the "I" whose restraining testimony Proust rejects and which prevents one from telling everything, is the "I" of Rousseau, and of *Si Le Grain ne meurt,* the "I" which aims at and lays claim to immediacy, confuses the man and the author under the same signature, forces the man out of his obscurity and natural insignificance, and makes him the hero of a true story—his own life. In pledging itself to report faithfully "what happened" not only in its true sequence but also in its actual process, it assumes the responsibility for a whole past which it believes that it remembers.

The "I" which Proust, far from rejecting, draws towards him and unfolds like a screen behind which he can move freely, dissembling and assuming new identities, the "I" of *Adolphe,* of *The Immoralist,* of Edouard's diary, of *A La Recherche du temps perdu,* is a false "I," an alibi, a *trompe l'oeil;* in other words, it is a creation.

A false "I"? That is putting it too simply. For the "I" of Proust is dual. The identification of the man, the author, and the character, which Gide and Rousseau strive to achieve in their autobiographies with a varying degree of success (not in terms of their lucidity or their sincerity, but of their scrupulous submission to the rules of their medium: "A fiction is not a lie," states the author of the *Reveries*) is replaced by a well-established distinction between four elements

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of quite unequal significance: their conflicts and their relationships lead us from the realm of the autobiography into that of the novel.

There are no longer three elements but four. As soon as the hero becomes independent of the man, or at least tends to become so, the author, in order to match the complexity engendered by this new division of parts, creates a new character, just as the complications of social life compel a modern state to multiply its functions. This new character is the narrator. He is delegated by the author to assume one of his functions, that of presenting and giving substance to the hero as he moves in time. From that point on, the hero becomes part of a fiction, but he is neither invented nor merely observed by the narrator, for the narrator is none other than that same hero, himself arrived at his final destination. The man who writes "I" is then a fictional character whom we see living also as his creation; we may call him Marcel, since on one occasion he is referred to that way; the actual man can go under his legal name, Marcel Proust; and as for the author, posterity will use a single syllable, Proust, to refer to the genius.

This fictional character who writes "I" is dual in his action and in his duration. As in memoirs, the man who writes and the man whose life we see are distinct in time, but tend to catch up with each other in the long run; they are moving towards the day when the progress of the hero through his life stops at the table, where the narrator, no longer separated from him in time nor tied to him by memory, invites him to sit down beside him so that both together may write: the End.

But the author of memoirs runs a risk (among many others which need not be discussed here): while he is telling what has happened, he knows what will happen next. Hence a strong temptation to fake (all the more so, since nearly always he sets to work for no other reason). Instead of painting the true picture of a life which moves blindly along, of actions which are almost always illogical, of chance happenings that upset or require substitute schemes, of an essential absurdity in other words, he sets forth a predetermined and orderly pattern which is rearranged, contrived, selected, twisted, and mutilated to fit into what may be the panegyric of a difficult and deserved success as well as the bitter and vengeful vindication of an undeserved failure. This is what he calls the cumulative experience

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of the sage in the twilight of his life. But that experience is made up of so many inaccuracies and misunderstandings, so many grudges and vanities which have remained unassimilated, and of so many deaths, that what he sees as a resurrection of memories, far from being the restoring to life of what had once been life, is nothing but the assiduous rehashing, in a surly or self-satisfied manner, of the leftovers. And how could he, indeed, restore to life what no longer exists, since at the same time it has ceased to exist within him? Memory does not revive what is dead, for isn't death oblivion?

Now, whatever is a handicap, a danger, or a pretense for the author of memoirs becomes freedom, ease, and art for the fictional narrator. His "I" has no memory, no past of its own. He is not bound by faithfulness to fact. He can cover the flowery tapestry of his grandmother's armchair with old rose silk, turn the grandmother into a great-uncle, and her armchair into an English saddle, change the surroundings of his childhood, and instead of losing his own virginity in the arms of the cook, he can exchange it for that of his young cousin. He can do everything, because all these things have been lent to him so that he may do what he pleases with them.

Who lent them to him? The author. From whom did the author take them? The man. What then are the laws which regulate these loans, these borrowings, these metamorphoses? Here is where the novel begins.

Here, first of all, begins the work of art. For these gifts made by the author to the narrator are not entirely gratuitous. The freedom of the latter is a conditional freedom, a freedom under surveillance, conferred upon him by his transition from the fidelity of fact, inherent in memoirs, to fiction, and is counterbalanced by his obligation to make good use of this freedom. In other words, out of this chaotic material, rather meager in the last analysis, he must fashion a work of art which must be true, alive, well-built, and significant.

Where the author of memoirs stumbled at every step, fell into shadowy gaps, and walked on a road littered with his own dead selves, the narrator selects, animates, invents, and regulates. He creates a universe of his own, according to the universal laws of creation. His goal is to reach the full expression of himself which is the only genuine aim of art, while respecting, illustrating, and clari-

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fying general laws in furthering the development of our knowledge of man, whether through new discoveries or through the intensity of his projection.

Out of the scattered pieces of an absurd life which are thrown at him, he must create another life, perhaps just as absurd, but whose absurdity is then re-thought, presented as such and intended as such. *Another* life: that is the whole point.

In this the work of Proust is exemplary. Not only because of the exceptional strength and novelty of Proust the genius, but also because of the remarkable insignificance of the two characters who stand at either end of the Proustian chain: the man, Marcel Proust, the banal purveyor of raw materials, and Marcel, the hero, that soft and painted image through which time seeps. The greatness of the work depends entirely upon the intermediaries: Marcel, the narrator, who tries to recapture the time which is lost and finally succeeds in doing so, and Proust, the author, who has already recaptured it long before Marcel, the narrator, emboldened by his discovery, decided to take up his pen to relate its low, minute, long, and invisible progress.

Marcel, the narrator, who says "I"; Marcel, the hero, who is "I"; Proust, the author, who never says "I," but constantly intervenes, even within the narration itself, who directs everything, understands everything, hurries the narrator, makes him linger when necessary, watches for his discoveries, makes use of them to enrich himself and never loses sight of the goal aimed at; and finally, Marcel Proust, whose snobbery, kindness, politeness, nerves, illness, and vices provide a lucid, pure, and indifferent Proust with a screen behind which he weaves his web. How skillfully does Proust utilize to his own advantage the physical, moral, and social deficiencies of that weather-beaten man who assumes the responsibility for his public appearances and for the miserable burden of living, for the sake of his own peace of mind and his freedom. Never, surely, have the qualitative differences between the elements which make up the personality of a great man better isolated his genius and better demonstrated his essential reality, which is almost independent of the being which he inhabits.

For the life of Marcel Proust and the work of Proust have no common denominator. Witness the incredible difference in quality

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between his work and the greater part of his correspondence. Letters are usually a bridge from the writer's side to the man's, since the hand which holds the pen is the same one that writes the masterpieces. But the letters of Marcel Proust, even though they show traces of the stylistic mannerisms, of the kinds of interests, and something of the way of thinking of the author, occasionally revealing his secret, display above all the caressing, hypersensitive, affected, flattering, artificial, and enormously irritating mask of the man of the world; but that mask is his face itself, and those who have been close to him recognize in it the features of a friend.

The contrast is not only one of quality; it is almost one of nature. For, on the day when Proust was struck by the "revelation" which turned a snobbish, ailing, and well-to-do idler into an artist, his essential nature was realized; and the transparent face which until then had only been the appearance that matched his trifling reality, became, without losing any of its characteristics (they were even intensified somewhat), a protective mask, as tender, smiling, and affected as ever, behind which he could conceal the new cruelty of his gaze. Yet it was out of that useless and insignificant life, most narrow in terms of human experience (and quite warped, besides), that was to emerge the work which throws upon our knowledge of man, upon the truth of the passions, and upon society itself, the most penetrating and vibrant ray of light ever witnessed in French literature.

Now, when we turn from this miserable life to that of Marcel, the hero, the latter appears just as trifling and bare; and certainly it is more confused, since even its time sequence eludes us. We can never surmise the age of that boy who, in a single season, plays with Gilberte in the Champs Elysées and tries to write an essay for the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* wins over Bergotte and never walks out of the house without his nurse, weeps in bed when his mother does not come to kiss him good night and offers his furniture to the owner of a house of assignation which he patronizes. By what charm was Bergotte won? And Gilberte, Swann, Odette, the Guermantes? Never do we see any evidence of it, nor of that intelligence which dazzles Saint-Loup. At no time is the hero, Marcel, presented to us as a living character; nor is he made palpable, or even described. The only portrait which is missing is his own. What is wonderfully

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alive is the analysis of his feelings, the transposition from the particular into the universal, the people he meets and the society they belong to, which is an extension of them without their being aware of it and which with even less awareness they typify. It is Marcel, the narrator, who, living and creating, is present. He is partly the deputy, partly the associate of the author.

But Marcel, the hero, is absent; just as Marcel Proust was absent from reality. But here the difference is striking. Marcel Proust was absent by default, for lack of living a life worthy of interest, until the day when Proust experienced a "revelation," when, in other words, he discovered simultaneously his genius, his means of expression, and his goal, when the awareness of his vocation gave meaning to his life, while at the same time, it imbued him with a feeling for life and with the notion of the eternal (that is, of a survival brought about by the suppression of time). On that day, Marcel Proust sank into an absence which was now deliberate and irretrievable. Since his life no longer has immediate meaning, the living man in charge of daily business and outward relationships finds himself condemned from now on, by a sovereign decree of the creator, to mediocrity and "niceness" for the rest of his life. He is reduced to standing on a platform, to beguiling people and making them forget that "Monsieur Proust is not at home," a role which he had acted perfectly even when "Monsieur Proust" had not yet arrived.

As for Marcel, the hero, he is absent because his absence needs to be felt. His contrived absence is one of the essential conditions of this work of art. Marcel must be insignificant, because it is his peculiar role. He is no longer innocently or naturally insignificant as Marcel Proust was before the "revelation": his insignificance has been forced upon him. For the narrator experienced the "revelation" before he started to portray the hero. He knows. A biography (we are still in the domain of fiction) is not life, it is an account; it has a definite pattern, an aim, and a method; it is the opposite of life, or, if you will, life seen upside down in a reversed perspective. Marcel, the hero, is supposed to depict the emptiness of a life which has not assumed its meaning and the straying of a man who, while anxious to find the reason for his sojourn on earth, constantly mistakes one object for another and finds slipping through his fingers all the things that he has been attracted to—love, society, and time—because they

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are transitory and futile. He has wasted his time. Even better, he has *lost* time; and has lost himself. It is not the lover of Gilberte or of Albertine who matters, the friend of Bergotte, of Elstir, of Saint-Loup, of Charlus, the familiar of the Guermantes, the grandson or the son. That figure is endowed with no more importance, no more reality or with no more definite age than those goods which he desires, possesses, and loses. The more indeterminate he is, the more evanescent, nonexistent, the better he is characterized, for that is his meaning in the scheme of the work. He is nothing but the meeting-place of sensations he does not understand.

What matters is the narrator, the one who has discovered the secret of these sensations; and having discovered it, regulates not his life but his art, writes not a biography but assembles a universe, depicts not a life in progress but rather, starting from the data presented to him, elucidates the general laws of truth.

The analysis of feelings, their death, their resurrection in their pristine state when a new object reawakens them, the dissolution of successive egos, carried away on the same tides that take the objects which once owed them life or around which they crystallized, the decomposition of the external appearance of people, the futility of social and worldly life, the soon-extinguished flash of reputations, the uselessness of whatever time marks out for death, all this black pessimism, this sacred horror of life, matter a great deal more than the false reality of feelings, of ambitions, of pleasures, of attractions, of lacerations, of sorrows, and of anxieties which take place within a being who is himself void of reality. But that pessimism of which Marcel, the hero, is himself the atoning victim, is compensated, redeemed, transfigured by the radiant optimism of Marcel, the narrator, the possessor of the secret. Although he does not love life, he loves what transcends it, what gives a being its permanence through the carnage of egos so joyously slaughtered. And the whole work piles up defeats, and spreads out this pessimism without once belying its tone of resilient joy. These supple, plentiful, flowery, and long-stemmed sentences, springing in their pure outlines out of a fruitful soil, swelling with all the juices exuded by the rich earth of a well-fed burying-ground, keep quivering under the caress of an invigorating breeze and of a perpetual sun. And that joy, which bursts out like spring, is truly a springlike blooming, the explosion of a regenerating

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springtime, and the victory of the eternal over the transitory. For when Proust strives to destroy all that is deceptive and conventional, he does it to clear the field for immortality, which he has to pay for with the death of whatever is mortal. He is not a murderer, he is a purifier.

In his almost total retreat, isolated even more by an illness which he broods over and nurses as others do their health, he knows now that life cannot be lived; it has to be dreamed; and detached from time, standing beside the stream, he will never stop elaborating its life-giving poisons. He knows that reality is to be seized through dreams and enchantment, that only thus can it be really understood, its essence expressed, and its permanence secured. The sacrifice of Marcel Proust has been accepted by the gods: it bears a magnificent fruit.

But Proust's joy does not consist only in the steady and radiant happiness of him who has found himself. It is also the endless rapture of the well-digger, who with his divining rod explores the time which he has just regained, and multiplies the discoveries and the miracles at which he was the first to wonder. The universe is created, framed once and for all, and its meaning is made clear to himself; but it is still full of surprises for him. His work is a continuous creation, an inexhaustible proliferation. He almost never erases, he adds and adds: his manuscripts, the typescripts, the galley proofs are overloaded with additions which are the sign of life at its fullest. For this man, who at first did not know how to live, and later found himself above living, was endowed with a prodigious spiritual vitality. As he reads over his work, what he has written means more to him as an overture than as an accomplishment; his meditation and his dreams give birth to new ideas, to new images, and above all, to new connections, just as, with others, action gives birth to action. He really lives a second enchanted life in the wake of the life which he did not make the effort to cultivate. But that second life is no more that of Marcel, the hero, than that of Marcel Proust. It is the projection of the *élan vital* of the author who is involved in the process of creation.

And here we arrive at a new intersection of the four characters, at the parting of the ways between fiction and reality. Now when "I"—Marcel, the narrator—pretends to remember something, it is an

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act of imagination on the part of the author. The one who actually remembers is Marcel Proust, or it is he rather who has preserved and will ingenuously supply the sensations whose recollection, by an unforeseen resonant harmony, will little by little reveal to Proust that his insignificant character, his visible and palpable shadow, has without knowing it, handed over to him the keys which open up the world and restore time.

But when "I" pretends to remember, it is not a lie on his part, it is a calculation. He builds the whole book to lead to the final revelation, which explains and illuminates everything. This is another way of saying that everything is ordered in preparation for that surprise-ending, so as to make it appear at once striking and obvious. Neither the reader nor the hero knows it, but throughout the book there appear signs which are invisible to the uninitiated, but which in retrospect will seem to have been premonitions. Unknown to Marcel, the hero, who is hopelessly wasting his time, the instruments of the "revelation" are at hand. And long before the full orchestra is unloosed by the uneven pavement in the courtyard of the Hôtel de Guermantes, the starched napkin, the little spoon tinkling against the cup, the taste of the madeleine, the sight of the steeples of Martinville, the enigma of the three trees of Carqueville as well as his disappointment in listening to Berma, or the cessation of pleasure in front of the church at Balbec, or the birth of Albertine out of the ashes of Gilberte, the preludes we fail to hear are distributed throughout with a skill that leaves them unnoticed until they are rediscovered later on, like the warnings of fate which we ponder over only after the occurrence of the perils they should have made us foresee.

Now, these sensations, so important since Proust's aesthetic and —one might even say—his metaphysic are founded upon them, are attributed to Marcel but supplied by Marcel Proust—supplied, we must remember, in their raw state; they have been transformed by the "revelation" prior to their being attributed to Marcel.

Now, it is not Marcel who has experienced the revelation, but it is Proust who at the same time has entrusted it to Marcel, the narrator, to prepare the reader for its surprise; in other words, the writing of a work of fiction, the theme of which has been imposed upon him. And that his theme is that of a personal experience, analogous to the glory of grace, to a kind of Pentecost. What is actually a direct

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testimony is turned into a novel by the device of "I." Instead of choosing the form of the *Confessions or of the Memories d'outre-tombe,* Proust adopts this false "I" in order to secure complete freedom of composition, of invention, and of detachment—thus turning this direct testimony into something which is truer, more universal, and ultimately a more faithful picture.

One must feel quite free—and, above all, freed from oneself—to be able to testify about truth; it implies, in the first place, that one knows what it is, and then, that one wishes to tell it; that one has managed, in other words, to remove and set in a new pattern whatever obscures it in the confusion of reality. But this false "I" is bound to the real "I" by right of birth. Unlike those ancient kings who claimed to descend from fabulous gods, Marcel is born out of the very real sensations experienced by Marcel Proust, out of the deep and intermittent pleasure which they conveyed to him and which he could not grasp until the very day when Proust felt and then understood that their repetition, in obliterating time, also gave him a secret clue to reality. The part played by the man did not go beyond that; he was no more than the blind and sensitive instrument of a miracle. But that was sufficient to compel Proust to use the personal form in his narration, even though he had to resort to a false "I" when he started to describe his discovery and to delve from the beginning, without explanation, into all its possibilities. The universe which he has thus created is an internal universe whose reality consists not in objects but in their perception and their metamorphosis. He can only express himself through direct language.

In coming down from Carqueville to Hudimesnil in the carriage of Mme de Villeparisis, Marcel says:

> . . . I was overwhelmed with that profound happiness which I had not often felt since Combray; happiness analogous to that which had been given me by—among other things—the steeples of Martinville. But this time it remained incomplete. I had just seen, standing a little way back from the steep ridge over which we were passing, three trees, probably marking the entrance to a shady avenue, which made a pattern at which I was looking now not for the first time; I could not succeed in reconstructing the place from which they had been, as it were, detached, but I felt that it had been familiar to me once; so that my mind having wavered between some distant year and the present moment, Balbec and its surroundings began to dissolve and I asked myself whether the whole of this drive were not a make-believe, Balbec a place

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to which I had never gone save in imagination. Mme de Villeparisis a character in a story and the three old trees the reality which one has been reading and which describes an environment into which one has come to believe that one has been bodily transported. . . . I recognized that kind of pleasure . . . that pleasure, the object of which I could but dimly feel, that pleasure which I must create for myself, I experienced only on rare occasions, but on each of these it seemed to me that the things which had happened in the interval were of but scant importance, and that in attaching myself to the reality of that pleasure alone I could at length begin to lead a new life.

On this invisible sign exhibited here and later confirmed lies our own revelation as well as Marcel's of the whole secret of the "search"; but being as blind to it as he himself is we do not see it. But this secret is not only that of a vocation suddenly revealed; it is the secret of the very work which is born out of the revelation; it is the rationale, the necessary form which genius, at last fully conscious of itself, must use to express itself fully, shaping a personal experience into a novel and thereby endowing it with universal value; in other words, to reorganize wholly the data of his experience so as to make us aware not of its progress but of its ultimate meaning. *A La Recherche du temps perdu* is not primarily the story of a discovery, or an animated and contrived retrospective. The discovery which apparently crowns and completes the book, recovering the *temps perdu* as the search ends, is, in reality, like all discoveries, a starting point. What is made available to us is the creation of a new universe, made possible and nourished by this discovery, or to put it differently, the application of laws, not new but unknown until then, which change the appearance and the structure of the world by revising our knowledge of it. That is why, despite all appearances, the autobiographical element is negligible, just as it is in that most inaccurately labeled of literary categories, the "autobiographical novel"—two words far more contradictory than they appear to be. For the order and the abundance which characterize the novel are due to the imagination aroused by the fluid operation of the mind; and the more ingenious and abundant the fruits of that imagination, the duller and more artificial appear the sterile gifts of the exact memory in contrast to this harmonious flow of treasures. As we shall have occasion to point out, the past is not a well-stored box from which we draw at leisure but a nearly empty box which has to be filled; it is enough to be presented with such a box.

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Of the biography of Marcel Proust, that is of the way his life unfolded, of its content, and of the resurrection of its past such as it was, there remain only, besides its formal frame, the very elements which were not then part of it: these unfinished sensations, this pleasure "whose object was not felt in advance." The rest, everything that wavered like the surroundings of Balbec, everything that made up the texture of his life—he himself, so remote from life, Mme de Villeparisis—all seemed like characters in a novel and were in fact nothing more than waverings and dreams. And these places and these people are thus void of reality only because they are waiting to be endowed with a soul and three dimensions, in order to become real places and characters in fiction, and to be received into a coherent universe where they will have their fixed position, once they are transfigured and drawn out of their limbo by the grace of baptism; they will regain their true nature; such is their vocation. This being the case, do not try to identify them. It matters little to what models Proust owes the initial stimulus of Charlus, of Saint-Loup, of the Guermantes, or of the Verdurins. These indeterminate friends, these encounters of Marcel Proust are not present in his work which would lose its meaning if regarded as a sort of gallery of portraits like those we find in any memoirs. Or if traces of them still persist, they are those that separate them from their specific reality to display in its pure state more general truth, the figurative and impersonal representation of which they become. And in that way, the following evocation of Saint-Loup, inasmuch as its point of departure is based upon a simple observation of behavior, can be applied to any number of friends of Marcel Proust, who poured their aristocratic ways into the crucible from which Saint-Loup was to emerge:

> At the same time my mind was distinguishing in Saint-Loup a personality more collective than his own, that of the "noble"; which like an indwelling spirit moved his limbs, ordered his gestures and his actions; then, at such moments, although in his company I was as much alone as I should have been gazing at a landscape the harmony of which I could understand. He was no more then than an object the properties of which, in my musing contemplations, I sought to explore. The perpetual discovery in him of the pre-existent, this aeonial creature, this aristocrat who was just what Robert aspired not to be, gave me a keen delight, but one that was intellectual and not social. . . . Sometimes I found fault with myself for thus taking pleasure in my friend as in a work of art, that is to say in regarding the play of all the parts of his

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being as harmoniously ordered by a general idea from which they depended but which he did not know, so that it added nothing to his own good qualities, to that personal value, intellectual and moral, to which he attached so high a price.

This "keen delight" corresponds perfectly, on the intellectual level, with the pleasure which he derived, on the emotional level, from the steeples of Martinville or the trees of Carqueville. It is another instance of "revelation." For this "work of art" which his friend becomes and which is the only form under which he really affects him ("I did not feel when I was with him and talked to him—and no doubt it would have been the same with everyone else—any of that happiness which was, on the other hand, possible for me to experience when I was by myself") is Proust's own discovery and his own form of expression. And the same "peculiar qualities," which Proust can fathom in Saint-Loup because they are his own creation, leave Marcel Proust indifferent when he finds them in his own friends because, although they emphasize, they throw no light on the impenetrable mystery which one being constitutes for another. Thus, the models supplied by the acquaintances of Marcel Proust lend him only the least part of themselves, only the visible edge of their being, something like the crest of a submarine reef unexplored, unexplorable, in whose stead Proust, as creative as nature, fashions a new one.

Hence, when Marcel pretends to remember, he does not manufacture his past by merely transposing that of Marcel Proust. For Marcel does not recall the feelings, for instance, which were once aroused in Marcel Proust by the young men he cherished, any more than Marcel Proust recalls the young girls no longer in bloom. Nobody remembers anything. But as for Proust, he knows how he suffers, and how he cannot help suffering. And it is a certain potential of suffering, invariable and equal to itself, that survives death and continues, no matter what the nature of the object that induces the suffering may be, even if it is imaginary. His memory tells him, it is true, that he has already suffered in the same way; but it does not supply him with any witness to help him reconstruct the pattern of his misery; for all the witnesses, whether internal or external, are dead.

Yet there is no need to reconstruct it when one can start anew

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and experience indefinitely sufferings which are meticulous, monotonous, yet always as fresh as flowers replaced every morning. Gilberte and Albertine are not conjured-up ghosts, called back to life by a few drops of dark blood for just long enough to record their passing thought. They are the figments and the inventions of a sensibility which is ever on the alert and more able to supply imaginary objects to feed its ever-present and lively suffering than to examine objects which have vanished and are forever mute.

In creating Gilberte and Albertine, whose different names are simply the means of distinguishing the separate crises of a single illness, Proust lives in the present and really loves only the daughters of his imagination. But just as he disintegrated himself to attain greater freedom and to become the master of a new poetic universe through which reality could be seized, here he splits himself in two so as to gain insight into the mechanism of love, into its secrets and its meaning, and, by going beyond his own experience and his own sickness, to grasp the laws of sickness. He makes himself suffer in order to see, understand, describe, and tell how and why one suffers. He suffers at the same time, intensely, yet with detachment—a trial, in the double sense of the word, for the cruel and lucid mind which provokes it.

Now we see the way in which Marcel, the narrator, reconstructs the past; he does ask it for witnesses, he sets up models against its background. Since everything keeps recurring in the same way, he can slide his intricate pleasures, his open wounds back into the past. He asks it no questions, but himself answers the questions it might raise. And instead of drawing ashes out of it, he finds what he needs to fill to the top that nearly empty box, the shape of which reminds him, after all, that he has lived in a certain way, in a certain time, and in a certain world; that over there, far away, a few dozen dried-up little characters are waiting for his imagination to redeem the failure of his memory (his indifference, in other words) by giving them life; not by resuscitating them, for it is with another kind of life that the creatures now emerging out of their confused appearances are endowed; now they live beyond themselves. Now he can indeed recapture time, though not the time which he has lost; in a space beyond the time he had abolished he can recapture those sensations and feelings which escape him at the very hour of their birth.

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However, in order really to embody the essential character of the work of art through which the "revelation" attains its ultimate and concluding aim, accounting for the flash of grace cast by the patron-god of genius, that work of art must also be an act of life. It heralds the birth of life. Life starts with it and merges into it. Even though Proust pretends to remember his past as Marcel, or even believes that he remembers it as Marcel Proust, he cannot recapture a time that is lost; he must invent it anew. The past may seem to have supplied him with memories of places, of individuals, and of certain perceptions which he later transposed; actually it supplied him only with landmarks. For there is a difference between the mechanical memory which does not preserve things and living beings in their palpable reality but records them in flat images, and the memory of perceptions, which is our only true and genuine memory, in as much as our body is the only survivor of the successive egos which are consumed by time, the only bond between these mortal egos and the immortal "I." Proust breathes new life into these flat images, a life which is new indeed, and far more intense than the one they formerly lived. He bestows upon them the three dimensions they never had.

Every distinction between past, present, and future is abolished, and these terms have now lost all meaning. His sensibility, so wonderfully disengaged, lends its resources as readily to that sentimental life which he perhaps actually lived as to the one which he invents, and whose imaginary objects are more real and more immediate for him than the others, because he has created them as focal points of his sufferings, and he is able to experience, to study, and to describe them simultaneously and in a single process.

And these resources are immeasurably increased because the artist from whom they flow experiences their immediate effect and is aware, at the same time, of their ultimate meaning. He knows, he feels, he sees, he is transfigured. It is he indeed who feels, because it is he, and he alone, who lives. He feels with a pain which is real but fruitful, and with the rapture of a man who knows how to make good use of his sufferings and to avail himself of his misery in order to further his knowledge.

Neither the loves of Marcel Proust nor the Albertine of Marcel matter or have ever mattered. Only the Albertine of Proust matters,

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the creature thanks to whom he understands and experiences what Marcel Proust and Marcel could never have experienced fully, because they would never have understood it. The immediate "I" of the living artist radiates on the past and endows it with the very elements he seems to draw therefrom.

Everything is new in the universe created by Proust. Everything—that is, his vision. Everything, except himself. For the live being who survived the death of those egos which time carried off in its own wasting away, has been illuminated by the revelation, not created by it. Divine grace does not alter and run counter to the fundamental elements of nature; it exalts them, sets them upright, and casts upon them supernatural light which throws their virtues into relief. Thus unity is reestablished. Marcel Proust and Marcel, the characters at either end, bring or receive the raw materials they do not themselves use. But the magical, chemical process of the creative imagination, transforming these materials beyond recognition so that they can enter the Proustian universe, does not project that Proustian universe outside of the being who has conceived it, and does not grant it the appearance of an independent life. It is always, in any case, a matter of appearance, for it is a rather obvious truth that the universe shaped by each one of the great creators stands directly for them and gives a more revealing and authentic picture of them than what is called their life. But whereas in Balzac, for instance, that universe is the product of a double explosion of thought and of temperament, and in Stendhal, a compensation for a frustrated poetical, political, heroic, and amorous ambition which for a long time was confused as to its aims and its means, in Proust it is wholly intensive and subjective, and subordinated to a private spiritual adventure which gives it its shape and its law. Between these two cast-off envelopes, Marcel Proust who is the "old man" and Marcel who represents him, Proust dictates to the narrator the story of the Pentecost from which emerges the creation of a world. And the false "I" becomes the true one because the story is true, even though the world itself is a poetic vision of reality.

(*Translated by A. d. B.*)

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Ernst Juenger

THE ADVENTUROUS HEART: TWO SELECTIONS

SADISTIC BOOKS

Marquis de Sade's *Philosophie du Boudoir,* which for more than a century circulated in banned editions, has things in it not generally considered subjects one writes about, if we disregard the inscriptions on the walls of privies. It is the work of a mind that has drawn the conclusions of its Rousseauism with a vengeance, and whose prose compares with the periwigged, impish writing of Crébillon, Couvray and Laclos as the broad axe of the Septembrist with the épée of the chevalier. In it one can hear the howl of the aardwolf, with its dank, sticky coat and insatiable hunger for flesh, as it greedily hunts through sewers, finally drinking blood and devouring the offal of life. Each draught from these red cups is like a mouthful of seawater, driving thirst to a higher and higher pitch of frenzy.

The mechanics of the prose contributes to this effect. Dashes are used to break up phrases and clauses, robbing the language of its breath and reducing it to a gasp and a groan. An endless succession of synonymous words gives every act and object a lascivious palpability—the language sends hot spikes through the flesh. No matter what the phrase, quotation marks lend it a connotation of obscenity—it is assumed without question that an infamous understanding exists between author and reader. Then there is the trick of interrupting the naked brutality of the writing by some genteel turn of phrase: this unexpected flash of coyness serves momentarily to reveal in the starkest possible light the wildest and most tumultuous scenes.

The book makes uncomfortable reading, not so much because of the horrors it contains, but because of the complete self-assurance with which it violates the unexpressed compact existing among all men. It is as if someone were to raise his voice in a room and say: "Now just among us beasts—"

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A revealing intermediate work in the development of this literature is the almost forgotten novel *Brother Matthew, or The Excesses of the Human Intellect,* by Dulaurens, who went to prison for writing atheistic books, where he died. In the character of Father John we can already clearly perceive Rousseauist virtue manifesting all the signs of that bestiality which is one of its basic components. The opposite of this is Voltairean lucidity.

The cruelty we find in Mirabeau's *Jardin des Supplices* is of a purely contemplative kind, and is far removed from De Sade's and Dulaurens' indulgence of the unbridled will. It is a cruelty that makes the variegated world shine with an added radiance, as a dark cloth lends added luster to the silk flowers embroidered on it. Walking about in these magnificent gardens, one comes upon vantage points from which one can see Chinese torturers at work, and the torments one witnesses arouse in one's heart a love of life of unexpected force. The colors and sounds evoke feelings of deep voluptuousness, the flowers in particular exuding an unearthly fragrance. The spiritual process that takes place is a kind of polarization: pleasure and pain, which ordinarily we find mingled in more or less equal amounts, are separated and set off against each other—while on one hand the image of man writhes in the dust, on the other it strides along as if in the enjoyment of a higher and freer existence.

Although the Roman circus aroused only a blind fury in the populace, in people of better education it probably awakened some such feeling as we get from the *Jardin des Supplices*—that proud exaltation man experiences when he looks upon fate. At the same time, however, they must have been aware of a base and demoniac element in their enjoyment of the spectable, for otherwise they would not have veiled the statues of the gods looking down upon the arena.

Now and then we discover creatures in our cities who seem to revel in the torments of their fellows. But it can always be observed that they are spirits in bondage: a mob leading the twilight existence of caged brutes, or people of Asiatic habits in whom something of the enervation of the steam bath still persists. As soon as the social order begins to totter, particularly in the interval between two historical eras, such creatures emerge from their cellars and crannies or from their private zones of depravity. Their aim is the establishment of a despotism more or less under the control of the intelligence, but

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one modelled upon the example of the animal kingdom. For this reason in their speeches and their pamphlets they assign animal characteristics to those whom they seek to destroy.

The antithesis of all this is something best described as benevolence, a quality that equally becomes the mighty and the meek. It is a light without which the dignity of man cannot properly shine forth. Benevolence is closely associated with what in us seeks power and eminence, but also with our free creative energy. It goes back to olden times, gracing the Homeric hero no less than the ancient king dealing out justice in the market place. It represents the spiritual side of power, and is based on a noble tradition whose symbol is not the imperial purple but the ivory staff.

Benevolence implies a disparity among men which it brightens and irradiates. Where it is kept alive, as the rule of law insists that it be, the images and forms of civil life grow effortlessly. It creates a climate in which civilization can thrive. It has enabled small cities to take a nobler part in the history of our planet than vast empires inhabited by uncounted millions, as tiny gardens will yield richer harvests than immeasurable deserts.

It is a fine thing that we take our bearings in history by these stars of the first magnitude. True, in this we resemble astronomers, who must content themselves with what they see—as only the bigger lights shine across the endless distances of space, so only an exalted consciousness penetrates the fogs of time. Yet there is a degree of brightness that triumphs over the obscurity of centuries; and Pericles' Athens looms clearer in our vision than that Athens of the Middle Ages, nearer to us by a thousand years, the few scraps of whose history Gregorovius has collected.

Still, when one thinks how mightily chaos and destruction ring us round, it remains a constant source of astonishment that these archtypes and exemplars of human order have preserved their radiance through the millennia. In this sense the *Odyssey* is a great song of clear reason, the song of the human spirit braving a world filled with elemental horrors and cruel monsters, braving even divine opposition, to reach its goal.

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MUSEUMS

A visit to a museum is always an exciting occasion, and often a frightening one as well. Now and then too one may observe some rather touching scenes, as for instance a freethinker standing before the fossil imprint of an archaeopteryx as if before an unveiled relic. Unfortunately we lack concepts capable of dealing with such observations—otherwise we should be able to profit from a trip like the one Pausanias took in the second century A.D. to the places of antiquity. We are at a loss to explain that thrill of awe which courses through us when the astronomer recites the number of his light years, or when the archeologist makes the gate of an unknown metropolis rise from the millenial dust.

We are prone to underrate the strength and extension that the museological passion has acquired and is acquiring every day. One gets some notion of the insatiability of this appetite if one considers how churches are changing into museums. Today the number of those who go to church with only museological intentions is legion, and the churches accommodate themselves to this state of affairs. The church officials themselves cannot escape this development—the distinction between sacristan and curator is imperceptibly being obliterated. This is matched, among other things, by the transformation of relics from sacral into museological objects. So for example on the island of Reichenau there is an ancient jug of which for centuries it was never doubted that it did service at the marriage in Cana. Today it is spoken of as a curiosity; the respect claimed for it resembles that which we accord a vase of the Ming Dynasty.

This transformation, which it often takes a sharp eye to detect, has like all things its political side. Church and State meet together in the sphere of the museological as in a common antechamber. Situations arise in which Leviathan could gobble up in one bite everything that the course of secularization has left untouched, did not a certain diffidence hold it back. Moreover, an arrangement giving the Church a kind of museological curatorship over its possessions is a much cleverer one than anything that might be effected by the separation of Church and State, or even by the use of force. It is a

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solution which, because it causes no awkward rents in the social fabric, spares the State a great deal of embarrassment. As custodian of antiquities, whether they be buildings and works of art, or morality and custom, the Church occupies a peculiar position the novelty of which is precisely its museological character. This novelty in turn is only the modern expression of a recurrent situation, for even in the cities of antiquity travellers looked up half-forgotten temples and had pointed out to them their ancient bric-a-brac, tripods, for example, reputed to have fallen from heaven.

Quite frequently one sees old patrician families coming to play very much the same role. Thus, not only are there princes living today in ancestral castles who can scarcely be distinguished from museum directors, but there are some whose revenues chiefly consist of entrance fees and the sums expended by the crowds of visitors on refreshments. Only in such places can one get a satisfactory notion of the power of democracy.

So far, however, we have discussed the museological impulse as it manifests itself in secondary and incidental forms. In the conservation of nature and the preservation of monuments, however, a huge system of taboos has been developed embracing an ever increasing number of objects, from tiniest insects to the vast areas of national parks. Today there are flowers, trees, forests, moorlands, houses, villages, cities and human beings under the museological interdiction, and even the boldest imagination cannot foresee what the end will be to this *noli me tangere* pronounced upon such hosts of dead and living things.

It is also remarkable to observe the coexistence side by side of this world under glass with that other world in which savagery and destructiveness rage almost without check. Yet there is probably a clandestine relation between the two, in so far, that is, as conscious conservationism triumphs over the remnants of conservative and senatorial forms of life. In this sense the museological impulse represents a safeguard that civilization erects against itself, an artificial counterpoise to the economic and technical devastation that it causes, a means, as in the case of the American Indians or the big game of Africa, at least to preserve things from complete extermination. The process can acquire a grandiose scope by removing whole areas of society—landscapes, trades, or even national groups inside more com-

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prehensive political organizations— from the detached scrutiny of the abstract intelligence. Often one encounters an almost inextricable confusion of conservative and conservationist intentions, although there can be no question that in both instances the museological activity itself is one and the same thing.

For this reason it is perhaps best to ignore all questions of intention and to look upon the matter as the consequence of the workings of nature, or of some obscure instinct; and above all we should never rely on the explanations contemporary man makes of his own endeavors. Seen thus, the intimate relation between our museological empire and the great religions of death and the grave becomes apparent, and would be even more apparent if parts of our collections were transferred to subterranean vaults. In the museological passion the necrophilic aspect of our science stands revealed—a disposition to force life into static and inviolate forms, and also perhaps to draw up a gigantic and meticulous catalogue that would furnish future generations with a true picture of even the obscurest stirrings of our existence.

When science joins hands with the museum, the former is diverted from its customary purpose and loses, in the technological sphere, that suspiciousness which it otherwise manifests; in the world of the museum neither patents nor a fear of espionage exist. Whatever the difficulties increasingly put in the way of people traveling about, in the museological sphere there is an unimpeded circulation of objects and information; everywhere a perfect harmony as to principles and procedures prevails, such as once distinguished those religious orders whose establishments were to be found in every country and kingdom. In a world where we are only too prompt to cut each other's throat in our bickerings about the social contract, there are places as untouched by the turmoil of society as the oasis of Jupiter Ammon.

Museums and cemeteries are alike, moreover, in their general exemption from criticism, as one can readily gather from the attitudes and facial expressions of their visitors. In the desire to endure a great force is contained; one can even feel it if one takes in one's hands an object that human solicitude has cherished for a thousand years, particularly if it is some great and culminating masterpiece. Our great collections are citadels of persuasiveness—and in so far as the human condition is crystallized and made visible in them, extremely

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important for the work they do in uniting mankind's efforts and conserving its achievements.

All this is clearly apparent in a negative form whenever things come to such a pass that forces otherwise sternly held in check find themselves free to oppose not this or that form of social order, but order in general. In such times of disorder not only are prisons and bastilles burned to the ground, but libraries and collections as well, which the mob rightly looks upon as strongholds of tradition and civilization. Indiscriminate iconoclasm is always a sign of the imminent levelling-off of a high stage of civilization. In this connection, there are a number of indications to warn us that the kettle is about to boil. One such is the worship of fire, not as a source of illumination, but as an incendiary means, fire in the form of the torch, fire as kerosene, as dynamite. But the infallible token of this disorder is the news that graves have been broken into and corpses exposed to view in the public squares. Such performances are not merely nasty whims indulged in by debauched spirits, but an incitement against our very humanity—for interment of the dead is the basis of the human condition, and a man who can play pranks with it would stop at nothing. Hence it is impossible to exaggerate the influence exercised by such spectacles; the last moral restraints are thrown off; it is a vortex reaching down to unspeakable depths.

Now and then, however, as in the case of a Burckhardt or a Winckelmann, we would seem to attach too great a value to the preservation of the monuments of the past. In this very overestimation an obscure pain is perhaps concealed, a secret lack of creative force. On the other hand it is just the bad painters, and particularly the swindlers and the counterfeiters, who share the mob's hatred of the great collections; beauty must vanish from off the earth so that the hideous may find some tolerance for itself. On the whole, however, this necessity of ours to collect and conserve resists any simple explanation; it is one of those large themes in which opposites merge like the elevations and depressions of a landscape.

(*Translated from the German by Martin Greenberg*)

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Newton Arvin

MELVILLE'S SHORTER POEMS

It is a curious fact, given the intensity of interest in Melville for the last thirty years, that his rather considerable body of verse should hardly have been discussed at all. Three years ago, it is true, Mr. Robert Penn Warren published in the *Kenyon Review* an extremely perceptive essay on Melville's poems, and both Mr. Matthiessen and Mr. Thorp have had illuminating things to say about them. But they remain still, one gathers, largely unread and very little discussed, remarkable as some of their qualities are; and it is on this account that I venture to put together here a few further notes on the subject.

A fact about Melville's work as a poet that strikes one very early is that he did virtually all of it in the midst not only of the most pronounced personal solitude but of a real slump in American poetry. It was a "bad" time for an American to be writing poetry, and it seems to be true that, whenever this happens, a writer loses something irreplaceable, but that nevertheless, if the root of the matter is in him, if the essential expressive faculty is there, his work will derive a kind of painful and difficult beauty from his very disabilities. Certainly this was true of the only two other poets of genuine talent in that long dull period that followed the Civil War, Sidney Lanier and Emily Dickinson; and Melville seems to me to have been in much the same plight they were. He did not have the support of the literary gulf-stream that had borne Emerson, Poe, and Whitman along on its benignant current, and as a result his poems have everywhere the aspect of having been brought to birth in something very like a dead calm. This does not keep them from having a very particular authenticity of their own.

There seem to have been two directions in which American poetry could move in the period that followed *The Raven and Other*

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Poems, Leaves of Grass, and *May-Day.* The one direction, which Lanier took, was the one that Poe and Whitman had pointed toward —an enhanced musicality, a more incantatory diction, an approach to the indirections of symbolism. The other, which Emily Dickinson took, was the one Emerson had hinted at—colloquialism, the prosaic, the anti-poetic, the ironical. It was in this latter direction that Melville moved, and in doing so, like Emily Dickinson, he "anticipated," as literary historians like to say, a whole series of poets in the twentieth century. But it is not as a mere precursor that one ought to speak of him. He wrote as he did, not as the conscious founder of a school, but because the natural development of his mind was what it was in the years that ensued upon his great work in fiction. He not only felt a distaste, like his European contemporaries, for Early Romantic rhetoric and Early Romantic language; he was disabused and discontented with all that was visionary, enthusiastic, and illusory in romantic idealism itself. Instinctively he moved away not only from the compensatory dream-world of Poe but from Emerson's repudiation of positive Evil and from Whitman's too unmodulated Yea's. Like Hardy, at very much the same time, he drew his essential force as a poet from his quiet, obstinate insistence on seeing things, so far as he might, in the light of the unideal Actual and not in the light of his hopes and wishes. The simplifications neither of romantic desperation nor of romantic confidence had any longer authority for him; like Hardy, he aimed rather at doing justice to "the mournful many-sidedness of things." Even when he returns, as in "The Æolian Harp," to one of the favorite symbols of romanticism, it is not to a romantic but to an actualistic end. "Listen," he says of the Æolian harp hanging in the window of a seaside inn—

> *Listen: less a strain ideal*
> *Than Ariel's rendering of the Real.*

In his own attempt to render the many-sidedness of reality, without transcendental distortions, Melville worked out, no doubt painfully, a poetic manner that, with all its miscarriages, had the elements of a genuine newness in it, and that flowered from time to time in a magnificent line or poem. This was partly an affair of sheer vocabulary. His impulse, not always an enlightened one, was to put behind him the effete conventions of English romantic diction—

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its expansiveness, its orotundity, its remoteness from speech—in the interests of a vocabulary that should either be actively anti-poetic or at any rate have a fresh expressiveness if only by virtue of its felicitous oddity or its freedom from attrition. It is true, and quite contradictory, that more than most of the bad poets of the time Melville was guilty of sprinkling his work with the stalest of stale poetic archaisms; and that there are too few pages that are not defaced by favorite nouns like *mart, wight,* and *elf,* or favorite verbs like *deem, loom,* and *ween;* by rhymes like *prime, clime,* and *sublime,* and such lines as "When, after storms that woodlands rue" or "Perfidious deem its sacred glow." Hardy's pages, too, are strewn with withered leaves like these, and Melville's strength, like Hardy's, lies elsewhere.

It lies partly in the use of a powerfully prosaic vocubulary, of terms that suggest business, industry, the law, and even mathematics. Such terms as these are not ubiquitous in his verse, but when they do appear they have, at least in some passages, an extraordinary effect of blunt factuality or unromantic precision. One comes upon nouns like *foreclosures, underwriters, operatives, fractions,* and *quotas;* adjectives or participles like *geometric, ambiguous, legalized,* and *revamped;* adverbs like *cogently* and *functionally,* and the verb *rescind.* Most of these words are not used metaphorically, as Shakespeare or Donne would have used them, but in their literal senses, and are thus without the intense effect of metaphysical imagery, but in a few passages they do suggest something very like this. The word *foreclosures* does, in a stanza of the fine poem, "The March into Virginia":

> *Who here forecasteth the event?*
> *What heart but spurns at precedent*
> *And warnings of the wise,*
> *Contemned foreclosures of surprise?*

In a passage in "After the Pleasure Party" the language of mathematics, perhaps with a reminiscence of the *Symposium,* is used in an almost seventeenth-century manner:

> *What Cosmic jest or Anarch blunder*
> *The human integral clove asunder*
> *And shied the fractions through life's gate?*

The association, in the last line, of the language of arithmetic with the

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language of village slang (*shied*) is what partly accounts for the special wryness of the passage. And elsewhere the essentially logical or rhetorical term, *ambiguous,* occurs with extraordinary force:

> *And over the spear-point of the shaft*
> *I saw the ambiguous lightning play.*

Such words as these, however, are less frequent than another kind of word, the rare, learned, often archaic, and sometimes apparently invented term that suggests an almost Shakespearean—or, again, Hardyesque—passion of linguistic creativeness. They are of various sorts. Some of them are nouns derived rather forcibly and even violently from verbs: *blastment* (which he may have remembered from *Hamlet*), *disenslavers, impingers, transcender* (all of which seem to be his own coinages). Melville—like Keats, here, it must be said—had a love of rare adjectives derived from nouns and given suffixes like *-less, -ful, -y,* or *-ly,* or the participial ending which suggests a verb, not always an actual or even a possible one. Tasteless and inexpressive as some of these are, his verse would not have its particular quality of humorsome independence and tough idiosyncrasy if it were not for words like *roofy, fellowly* (which may have come from *The Tempest*), *Juny,* and *fally* (the last two abortions his own): or *flushful* (his own coinage), *blastful,* and *aidful;* or *vowelled, foliaged, glenned,* and *interserted;* or *shroudless, quenchless* (both in *Moby Dick* and in "The Eagle of the Blue"), *termless,* and *noteless.* This last group at once suggests Hardy's *lightless, griefless,* and *stormless;* and it is eloquent of the odd, unconscious sympathy between the two poets that both of them should be found using a form of the rare verb, *forefeel*:

> *And faces fixed, forefeeling death.* (Melville, "The Armies of the Wilderness")

> *"Maiden meet," held I, "till arise my forefelt*
> *Wonder of women."* (Hardy, "The Temporary the All")

On the other hand, Melville is uninventive of verbs; there is nothing in his poems to parallel Hardy's *outshow, unknows,* or *inexist.* Very uncommon is the forcible transformation of an adjective into a verb, as in "The College Colonel":

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An Indian aloofness lones his brow.

In any case, however, Melville's verse is not dependent on nonce-words and rarities for its verbal intensity. Again and again, even in poems that miss fire as a whole, he exhibits the genuine poet's native mastery over language by his use of a familiar or not unfamiliar word in a manner that suddenly confers upon it a magical potency. Sometimes the spark is struck by a single noun or a noun and its adjective together:

And a singe runs through lace and feather.

With golden mottoes in the mouth.

Sometimes it is an adjective or a verbal adjective strangely and transfixingly used:

The moody broadsides, brooding deep.
Each bloomed and died an unabated Boy.
Glazed now with ice the cloistral vine.

Or the two fine lines which Mr. Warren has quoted:

(Weird John Brown).
Perish, enlightened by the volleyed glare.

But Melville can use familiar verbs with an equally ironic or an equally strange and connotative effect:

We fought on the grass, we bled in the corn.

The hemlock shakes in the rafter, the oak in the
driving keel.

(What like a bullet can undeceive!)

Nirvana! absorb us in your skies,
Annul us into thee.

In the last line it is of course the use of a word bristling with legal or commercial connotations, but in a mystical context, and followed by an unidiomatic phrase ("into thee"), that accounts for the poignancy of the effect. In other lines it is not easy to distinguish between the *mana* of single words and that of the metaphor:

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When, cut by slanting sleet, we swoop
Where raves the world's inverted year.

Hunt then the flying herds of themes!

When Asia scarfed in silks came on
Against the Greek and Marathon.

The spider in the laurel spins,
The weed exiles the flower.

There is more than a suggestion in these last four lines, as there is elsewhere in Melville, of some of the French Parnassians, especially Gautier, whom he pretty certainly did not know.

The imagery of Melville's poems deserves a study by itself, and I have space for only a few remarks here. It is striking, for one thing, that the range of imagery varies interestingly and revealingly from volume to volume of the three collections Melville published during his life and the collection he left in manuscript—*Battle-Pieces, John Marr and Other Sailors, Timoleon,* and the manuscript poems. In all of them, and especially in *Battle-Pieces,* one has to make a simple distinction between the pictorial imagery, the imagery "given" by the themes themselves, and the true metaphors. The pictorial imagery of *Battle-Pieces* is of course the imagery of war, and here it is not too much to say that Melville is the first poet in English to realize the meaning of modern technological warfare, and to render it, grimly and unromantically, in his work. He is the Brady of Civil War poetry —in a sense in which none of the others, not even Whitman, was. It is true that *Drum-Taps* is pitiless enough in evoking the horrors of warfare—the shocking wounds, the atrocities of surgery, the stretchers and the bandages—but this does not suffice to destroy its prevailing atmosphere of dreamy strangeness and tender solemnity. Melville's war poetry is not mainly the poetry of fitfully-flaming bivouac fires or mystical vigils kept on the field at night; it is the harsher poetry of mathematics and machinery, of what he calls "plain mechanic power," the poetry of the military engineer and technician, of gunboats and torpedoes and ironclads, of grape and canister, of earthworks and rifle-pits and batteries, of wagons mired in the mud and shrapnel screaming through the air. Remote as he was personally from the war itself, Melville discerned as a poet that the days of the dragoon

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and the grenadier, as well as of "the carved and castled navies," were past and gone, and that the days of the military railroad and the torpedo boat had come to stay. Though that is only one of its dimensions, *Battle-Pieces* derives much of its force from Melville's conscious intention to place war

Where War belongs—
Among the trades and artisans.

This, at any rate, was his conception of modern war as an activity; it was very far from being his only feeling about the Civil War as a crisis in American, indeed in human, history. On this plane, his response to the catastrophe was extremely complex; anger, pity, revulsion, the love of heroism, the hope of reconciliation—all these, and more, were elements in it. But his deepest, most instinctive apprehension of the war was none of these, but, as the metaphors tell us, a radical, ambiguous emotion of mingled horror and elatedness, of terrified jubilation—the appalled consciousness of looking on at some wild, frightful, but nevertheless splendid convulsion in the natural world; some sudden and shocking eruption, upon the smiling scene, of primordial forces of destruction and re-creation. *Battle-Pieces* is dominated by the imagery of astronomy (stars, constellations, meteors, comets, eclipses), of meteorology (winds and storms, thunder and lightning, rainbows), and of geology and geography (earthquakes, cataracts, rivers, shores and strands, the sea, and the primordial deeps). It may well be remarked, to be sure, that warfare inevitably suggests to the poet, and indeed to the most prosaic reporter, the language of comets, storms, and thunder. This is true, and Melville's naturalistic images are sometimes nothing but the commonplaces of the war correspondent or the patriotic bard: "the hurricane from the battery" ("The Eagle of the Blue") or Stonewall Jackson's "sword with thunder clothed" are traditional and banal enough.

But mere adherence to tradition and convention will not account for the intense force of the elemental imagery in the best poems of *Battle-Pieces;* what lies behind them, and irradiates them, is something more profound and personal than that. This is certainly true, in "The Portent," of John Brown's "streaming beard" as "the meteor of the war"; it is true, in "Aurora Borealis," of the "steely play" of

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the Northern Lights that sink and fade with coming of peace; and it holds, in a poem like "A Canticle," for the strange, cloudy, confused, but exciting imagery of precipice, cataract, thunder, and gorge, or in a greater poem, "The Conflict of Convictions," for the complex imagery of returning comets, of wreck-strewn strands, of the miner in the cave, of "Derision" stirring "the deep abyss" and the "slimed foundations" of the gulf laid bare. In the fine poem, "Misgivings," the metaphor of the tempest is used with magnificent freshness for the expression of a kind of exhilarated dismay.

Some of the finest images in *Battle-Pieces* are images of the ocean and especially of the seashore; one turns to the later volume, *John Marr and Other Sailors,* and finds these images on every page. Naturally enough, given the very title of the collection; but in any case there can be few poets anywhere, since Camoens, more genuinely sea-going than Melville. *John Marr* smells of salt air and seaweed—it reverberates with the uproar of storms at sea—as very little poetry in English or perhaps any modern language does. For most poets to whom the sea has been a profound symbol—for Heine, for Whitman, for Rimbaud—it has been the sea mainly as a landsman would view it and know it, the sea as envisaged from the shore or in imagination, a symbol of freedom and infinitude. Melville is a rare case of a serious poet who had also been a sailor before the mast, and even when one has made every deduction for the amateurishness of some of these poems, one is bound to feel that the sea exists in his verse with a kind of cruel, bitter, but still salubrious reality with which it exists in few of the others.

It appears mainly as a symbol of destructiveness and terror; it is still the sharkish sea of *Moby Dick.* The sea-creature that appears most characteristically is in fact the shark; the shark that already, in *Battle-Pieces,* "glides white through the phosphorous sea," and that reappears here as the ferocious Maldive Shark, with its saw-pit of a mouth and its charnel of a maw.* Even the sea-fowl which appear, and there are several of them—gannets and petrels, the white goney, the man-of-war hawk—are birds of ill omen for the most part. The most sinister are the haglets or shearwaters which appear in the powerful narrative poem, "The Haglets," and which, inscrutably

* One recalls the shark in Leconte de Lisle's poem, *Sacra Fames,* "the sinister Prowler of the steppes of the sea."

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following with "untiring wing and lidless eye" the flagship that is sailing proudly home from a great victory over the Spanish fleet, portend the ironic disaster that overtakes it:

The hungry seas they hound the hull,
The sharks they dog the haglets' flight;
With one consent the winds, the waves
In hunt with fins and wings unite,
While drear the harps in cordage sound
Remindful wails for old Armadas drowned.

The Admiral's ship is driven on a lee shore by a tempest when the vessel's compass is thrown off—deflected by the heat of the captured Spanish swords in the armchest nearby. And the dominant symbol in *John Marr* is indeed the symbol of wreck and disaster: a deserted, dismasted, drifting, waterlogged vessel in "The Æolian Harp"; in "Far Off-Shore" a deserted raft flying its now ineffectual signal; a martial ship, in "The Berg," that strikes an iceberg and goes down without jarring the least spur or pinnacle of the great cold mass. The "dead indifference" of the iceberg stands of course for the feeling-less unconcern of the natural world generally, but there is restoration and a new health in the transcendence of this hurtful knowledge; such at least is Melville's last word in the volume:

Healed of my hurt, I laud the inhuman Sea—
Yea, bless the Angels Four that there convene;
For healed I am even by their pitiless breath
*Distilled in wholesome dew named rosmarine.**

Many of the poems in the third volume, *Timoleon,* especially the group called "Fruits of Travel Long Ago," were probably written much earlier, when Melville was only beginning to try his hand at verse, and perhaps for that reason they are for the most part tamer and more conventional. As one would expect of poems suggested by a certain kind of travel, their imagery is that of sight-seeing, almost that of the guide-book; they abound in palaces, villas, and gardens, in statues and paintings, in temples, cathedrals, and pyramids. Only

* There is surely an unconscious but felicitous echo here of a passage in Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blacknesse*: "You shall . . . steepe/ Your bodies in that purer brine,/ And wholesome dew, call'd *Ros-marine.*" The "Angels Four" are doubtless those in the seventh chapter of Revelation.

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occasionally does this imagery of the *sehenswürdig* really glow with a metaphorical luminosity, but this it does in "Pisa's Leaning Tower" (with its metaphor of suicide), in the extraordinary Venetian poem which Mr. Warren has analyzed, "In a Bye-Canal," and in the familiar little exercise in the style of Landor, "The Ravaged Villa." The volume would be notable, moreover, if it were only for the now well-known and certainly remarkable poem, "After the Pleasure Party," with its renewed use, after *Battle-Pieces,* of large astronomical images—"starred Cassiopeia in Golden Chair"—and of other elemental metaphors; prairie fires, here, and geysers, which become symbols of sexual desire.

Most of the poems that Melville left in manuscript were evidently the work of his very last days. Many of them are quiet to the point of colorlessness, but what is most noteworthy about "Weeds and Wildings" and the other miscellaneous poems is the almost complete transformation of mood, after *Battle-Pieces* and *John Marr,* which they embody. Quite gone are the elemental naturalistic images of the one and the disastrous nautical metaphors of the other; in their place appears the homely imagery of countrified retirement and quiet domestic simplicity. Nothing could be more eloquent of the unprotesting tranquillity which Melville achieved at the end of his life than this low-pitched poetry of weeds and wild-flowers, of red clover, hardhack, and sweetbriar, and of a bird life as far as possible from that of *John Marr*—a life of which robins, bluebirds, meadow-larks, and humming-birds are now characteristic. The prose dedication makes it clear that the red clover is being quite consciously used as a metaphor of humility, of the commonly and broadly human—almost like the grass in Whitman—because it is "accessible and familiar to everyone," and "no one can monopolize its charm." Nor is it only the clover that expresses this; so, too, do most of the symbols in these poems. The tasseled corn of the western prairies appears, in a poem called "Trophies of Peace," as an emblem of unwarlike, undistinguished, unhistoried, tranquil human living; and when, in a very late poem, "The Lake," Melville seeks to express his sense of the primordial rhythms of death and rebirth, of decay and renewal, he does it through the image of a small New England lake in the midst of pines, from the banks of which one has glimpses, on the uplands beyond, of barns and orchards and corn-fields, basking in the autumn sunlight.

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It is an extraordinarily peaceful and pastoral coda to a body of work that had been predominantly stormy.

From the point of view of achieved form there is no denying that Melville's poems are mostly very imperfect, and some of them hopelessly so; everyone who has spoken of them at all has made this observation, and with justice. It is not only that Melville began writing verse too late in the day—he was at the end of his thirties—ever to attain the technical sureness and resource that have to be striven for early; there were other and deeper reasons, for which there is no space here, why his verse should strike one in large part as the work of an amateur of genius. The fact remains that, in at least a score of poems, there is a fusion of image and emotion, of meaning and language, so complete and so intense as to make all talk of amateurishness impertinent. I would myself be inclined to make the list of such poems a longer one than either Mr. Warren or Mr. Matthiessen has done; but in any case I am sure that no careful reader of Melville's verse as a whole would gainsay the extraordinary interest it has as a revelation of his autumnal state of spirit—as a revelation, too, of one of the great possibilities for the American mind in Melville's time. The breath he had been healed by had indeed been distilled in a wholesome dew, and as a result Melville had arrived at a doubleness of vision, a flexible moral realism, such as one finds in the work of few American poets of any generation.

At no time in his life had he been able to accept or tolerate "the exorbitant hopefulness," as he called it, "juvenile and shallow," which was the spiritual morphia of his age, and which had been expressed on a relatively high level by his great contemporaries, Emerson and Whitman. Neither, on the other hand, however, did he allow himself in his old age to succumb to the equally unmodulated negations of his younger contemporaries, Mark Twain and Henry Adams. His intuition of the crushing impassivity of physical nature was as bitter as Adams's own—"Nature," he writes, "is nobody's ally; 'tis well"—and like his own Sire de Nesle he had lost his thirst for roving; he had discovered that "terrible is earth." Like Mark Twain, and much earlier than he, Melville had had to abandon the conviction on which the republican order had on one side been founded, and

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Which holds that Man is naturally good,
And—more—is Nature's Roman, never to be scourged.

His awareness of human evil was as acute in the period when he wrote his verse as it was when he was writing *Moby Dick*:

Who weeps for the woeful City
Let him weep for our guilty kind.

His sense of moral irony, moreover, is a kind of setting-on-its-head of the Emersonian "good out of evil":

Indolence is heaven's ally here,
And energy the child of hell;
The Good Man pouring from his pitcher clear
But brims the poisoned well.

Yet at the end of his ordeal, unlike Henry Adams, Melville could find the inward wholeness that kept him from being a victim of what Blake called "single vision":

"Since light and shade are equal set,
And all revolves, nor more ye know;
Ah, why should tears the pale cheek fret
For aught that waneth here below.
Let go, let go!"

So, in "The Lake," he expressed his final sense of the contradictoriness, the moral chiaroscuro, of both experience and nature. Yet, despite the language of this particular poem, the perception did not lead him to a mere mystique of polarity, an unwise passiveness of dialectical acceptance. In "The Conflict of Convictions," much earlier, this essential insight had been so expressed as to give it an ethical dimension, to make it involve the will, to provide for the conscious counter-thrust of voluntary resistance:

I know a wind in purpose strong—
It spins against *the way it drives.*

Indeed, in the same poem, Melville had lifted this principle—the creative interaction of opposites—to a religious level:

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YEA AND NAY—
EACH HATH HIS SAY;
BUT GOD HE KEEPS THE MIDDLE WAY.

A poet capable of such insights as this could surely with justice describe the whole body of his work as a "rendering of the Real."

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BOOKS

FICTION CHRONICLE

A RAGE TO LIVE. By John O'Hara. Random House. $3.75.
THE CRACK IN THE COLUMN. By George Weller. Random House. $3.00.
LOVING. By Henry Green. Viking. $3.00.

A Rage to Live is a disaster, John O'Hara's own appointment in Samarra. In it he has abandoned the truculent stylization of his early novels, their unilinear pencillings of paths to doom, and has let go with luxurious unrestraint, as if to show that he too could write a crowded social novel. Because his previous books were structurally so simple he could control their materials through his embittered stance of tough-guy moralism, and with his mimetic gift could work them to a garish gloss; but *A Rage to Live* is limp, diffuse, tasteless, without inventiveness or binding values. Not by accident, it is also his most ambitious book; its very bigness reveals his intellectual barrenness.

O'Hara was never a truly serious artist. The major interest of his work was always as a kind of superior reportage or as a contemporary phenomenon, the best of the post-Hemingway tough-guy books. In his early novels loneliness became a domineering system: each of his characters went through glazed and fetichistic maneuvres determined by iron laws of fatality, and were thus mere bits of rigid data, the very contrary of those streams of changing qualities that the western novel has assumed character to be. Consequently *Appointment in Samarra* and *Butterfield 8,* for all their nagging moralism, could never rise to the level of complex morality; they were merely skilled line-drawings of middle-class mannerisms. O'Hara strained for significance (for beneath his pose of American self-sufficiency does he not want to be profound as well as skilled?) but could not achieve it. His infatuation with Fitzgerald may be seen as a yearning for the imaginative largesse, the sense of grace and the penetration into darknesses that Fitzgerald commanded and he did not. Hemingway was his real master, the lesser Hemingway who taught a generation of reporters that talking through the side of one's mouth was art and strapping one's emotion wisdom. And of all the

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reporters O'Hara was the most gifted; he did as much with the novel as any reporter could.

Now ambition has undone him. *A Rage to Live* is not unselective, for it is obvious that O'Hara has deliberately and for some mysterious purpose included his three-page catalogue of people attending a funeral (he seems to think irony a consequence of enumeration), his seven-page description of a shopping trip, his maddening transcriptions of moronic small-talk. The amount of irrelevant copulation in the novel is awesone —not because it is copulation but because there is no focus of meaning to which any activity may be related. A passing state trooper who never appears in the book again "wore a gray felt hat with a chin-strap and with the brim turned up on the left side, his whipcord tunic had a high collar, and he wore whipcord breeches and black puttees. . . . " Why is the brim turned up on the *left* side?

O'Hara repeatedly betrays what for him should be the last thing to be betrayed: that the tough-guy is naive, sentimental and banal before experience that is even slightly complex. He describes the failure of Grace Tate's marriage with the discrimination of a schoolgirl; he reports that three boys were known as "the Three Musketeers without further specific identification" and then, to leave no problems unsolved in the reader's mind, actually identifies which is Athos, Porthos and Aramis! So soon as he plunges into psychological observation he is embarrassingly uncertain of himself and his characters, but give him something physical, something *real* to describe and he rambles on for pages. Of course, there are brilliant bits of journalism such as the now famous whorehouse scene, but while novels may use such scenes within some larger scheme they cannot be a mere sum of them.

And what is most important is that O'Hara's own characteristic literary attitudes are the cause of his failure. Lacking any sense of or interest in human *Innerlichkeit,* he relies on two behavioristic notions that are the bane of modern American writing—the notion of the revelatory gesture according to which the way a man slants his hat or picks up his cigarette reveals deep secrets about his soul, and the notion of the sartorial baedecker according to which an enumeration of the materials and colors of clothes has some hidden psychological significance. But his undoing is most of all the consequence of the cult of maleness, the Hemingway view of writing as a "pure" uncognitive act of male assertion, in a class with bull-fighting, deadly accurate reporting, and superior orgasms. With the cult of maleness comes the sadistic anti-intellectualism, the kind of mind-baiting O'Hara has indulged in against a conjured figure he likes to call "Edmund Wilson." Now all of these attitudes of

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mechanized lovelessness repay him in full. For what is his rather nasty and supererogatory cruelty toward his own characters but the issue of lace-curtain bumptiousness and the sign of an inability to reach the love he would always like to summon, the love Fitzgerald *could* summon?

Tricked, tricked by his own devices. Of course, there is still Grace Tate with her renowned appetites, the one character O'Hara seems really to like with the slightly guilty admiration of the American male for the woman of endurance. But then, as even O'Hara's book indicates, Grace Tate doesn't seem to have much fun either; she may rage but she doesn't live.

George Weller's political novel is one of those revolving-stage affairs in which several sets of characters are repeatedly brought to the foreground and finally thrown together in an improvised climax, in this instance, the splitting of Greece by civil war. The trouble with such novels is that they are usually tripped by the very problem in technique they set out to avoid: how, in the absence of plot, to include a multiplicity of actions and scenes and yet preserve structural unity. Usually this problem can be solved only through a strong central character or commanding idea, at the flanks of which the novel's parts fall into order.

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Weller's book has neither, and it soon becomes clear that one cannot expect the usual novelistic pleasure from it. For it is really a document, a chronicle.

Weller went to Greece as a correspondent and came back, as he remarks of one of his characters, unfitted for simplicity. Like so many other receptive Americans, he discovered Europe, and it is to his great credit that he fell in love with Greece when it was at its nadir, sick and flayed. *The Crack in the Column* is suffused with this love felt by a good and decent man for a humiliated country, and while I am not one of those who think a plenitude of emotion enough for a good novel, I have been constantly surprised and pleased to see how well love does sustain Weller's book, lending it a touching sort of chivalry. His Americans and British are strictly cardboard and aspirin, but his Greek scenes are very fine, especially for evocation of locale—Athens, the workers' quarters and Kolonaki, its wealthy shameful suburb; the *andarte* mountain camps; the Stalinist meetings; the collaborators' camp. Two personalities live in the book: Miltiades, a wry, weary underground worker who seems the very personification of what one thinks of as Europe's qualities; and Loulides, an old Stalinist functionary loyal because the CP is a "loop into the unknown" and because he hates the aesthetes who flirt with it and leave it. A "right-winger" suspect in the eyes of some CP leaders, Loulides

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serves as a link with the bourgeois world; he is also one of the few Stalinists, real or imagined, I have ever met who is an interesting human being.

But it is in ideas that the book does not satisfy its needs. Weller despairs of both sides in Greece, which while a good premise is in itself not enough for a political structure. His mind is too American, too empirical; he admires the Greek talent for endless political discussion but does not understand that without a total involvement in such a frenzy of dialectic a first-rate political novel cannot be written. And sometimes he is simply conventional, as in his view of America as an udder to be milked or an ingenue to be wised up.

The political novel must deal with ideas, but while they should be left inviolate at the novel's base they cannot remain mere abstract lumps of thought once it begins to move. The successful political novel generates such emotional heat from situations of conflict that the ideas beneath it are, so to speak, melted into its movement, fused with the experience of its protagonists. In *The Possessed* Dostoievsky did this to perfection. More recently, *Man's Fate* was fired by the heroism of revolutionary commitment, *Bread and Wine* warmed by the pathos of revolutionary doubt. But Weller has neither commitment nor doubt, only anguish and integrity.

It is hardly his fault that he is an American, the best kind of American, and that anguish and integrity are about all the best kind of American can offer the world today. But they are not enough, these liberal virtues, and they cannot be leaned on as heavily as Weller does if a novel adequate to modern political experience is to be written. Perhaps no American can write such a novel because no American cares enough as yet about the idea of politics.

About Henry Green's novel there need be no qualifications at all; it is a completely successful minor work, very funny and yet moving as one plays with it in memory. I do not know Green's other books and therefore can't discuss *Loving* against his total achievement; right now, it doesn't matter. But if, as Philip Toynbee has written in these pages, Green is a "terrorist" of language, then *Loving* represents a post-terrorist phase, the campaign won and peace sealed. *Loving* is composed in unstrained and unmannered prose, fresh because it is not meant to convey *ennui,* disillusion or any other fashionable attitude.

"Once upon a day" begins the book, and "they were married and lived happily ever after" it ends. These are clues to a fairy tale, and they are worth following. But in *Loving* the fairy tale is what actually

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happens, the events of every-day surface. A group of British servants works in a castle in Eire during the war; they are glad enough to be away from the bombs but their guilt ruffles the order to which they are accustomed. Disturbances follow: the head butler dies and Raunce, a soft scheming fellow, takes his place; the mistress leaves for England to visit her soldier son and meanwhile the son's wife is found in bed with a neighbor. To symbolize and justify their unease, the servants fabricate excitement by convincing themselves they are in danger from invading Nazis and secret IRA agents. There then follows a series of mild confusions (a lost ring, mistaken identity, false suspicions) which remind one, in their playful tone, of the uses to which misunderstanding can be put in Shakespeare's comedies. But all this happens "once upon a day," the mere events of the moment to be blown away once a pattern of order is reestablished. As against the events of every-day existence there is threaded through the novel the simple reality about which they fluctuate, the reality being *Loving*. At the end, Raunce marries a maid and lives with her happily after; the proper balance in life has been re-established.

The book's comedy flows from a dual incongruity: the innocent excitement in which the servants indulge is, after all, based on not very innocent external history, and their adventure is placed in an artful

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tension with the reality of loving. But in the meantime there are a good many rich asides: sly thievery, a touch of barely noticeable lesbian feeling, a marvellous exercise in conversational solipsism, a subtle examination of status relationships among the servants, and the unfolding of Raunce's complex character from traditional clown ("clean your teeth before you have anything to do with a woman") to a man of considerable sensibility.

All this could be bungled with great ease, and the reason Green does not is that he writes about the servants' life from a steady uncondescending distance. No nonsense here about the author being a butler or scullery maid; Green is Green and not Raunce, which is why Raunce is. An author has no obligation to identify himself with his hero, he needs only to create him, and in *Loving* the condition for creating is distance maintained and measured. This is why the novel is so good, but there are other reasons too: Green's willingness to grant credit to his characters, to let them live and move in their own terms; his very fine ear; and his occasional shy eruptions into lyrical description that help establish the fairy quality of the book.

Irving Howe

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